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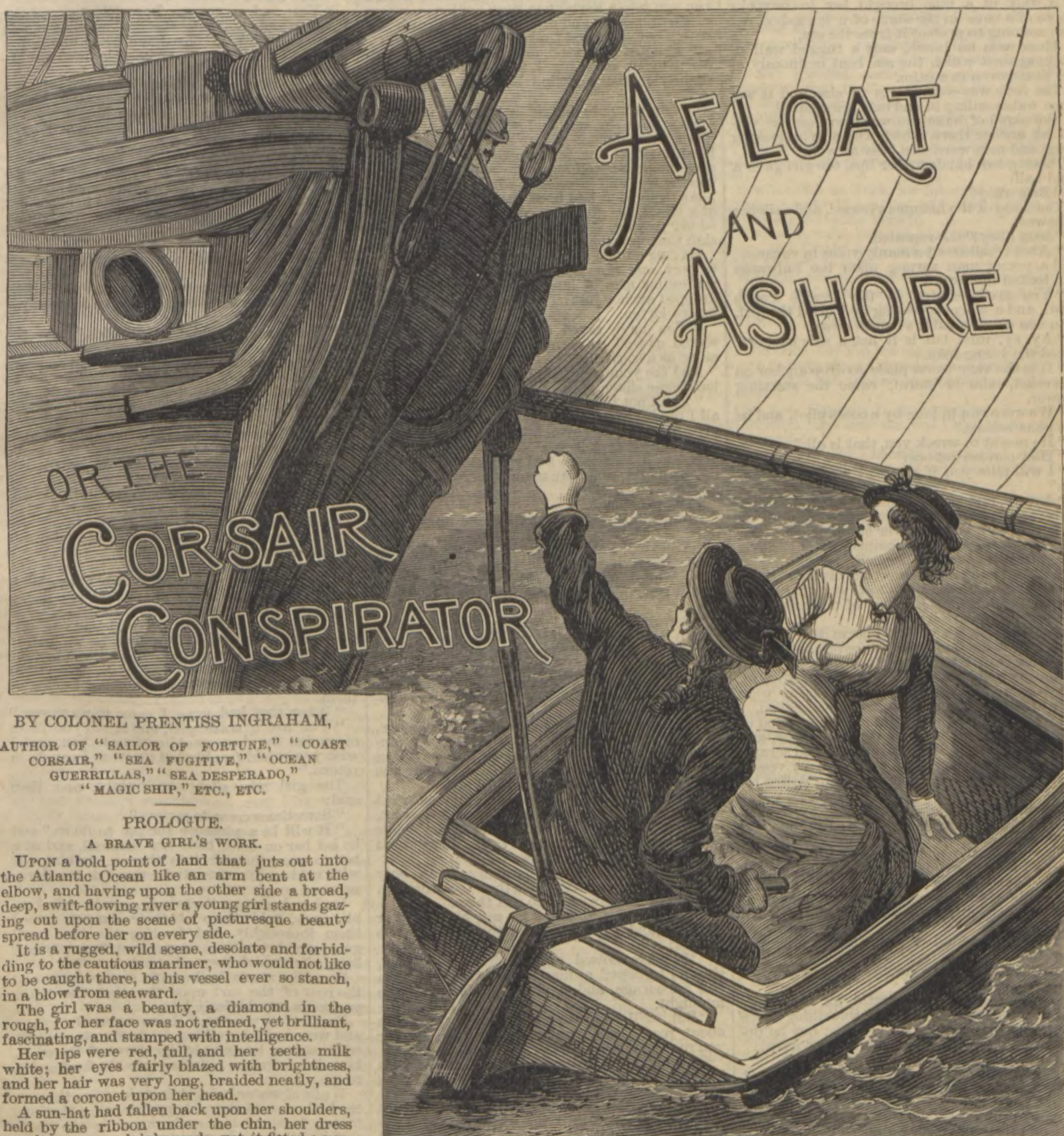
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BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "SAILOR OF FORTUNE," "COAST
CORSAIR," "SEA FUGITIVE," "OCEAN
GUERRILLAS," "SEA DESPERADO,"
"MAGIC SHIP," ETC., ETC.

PROLOGUE.

A BRAVE GIRL'S WORK.

UPON a bold point of land that juts out into the Atlantic Ocean like an arm bent at the elbow, and having upon the other side a broad, deep, swift-flowing river a young girl stands gazing out upon the scene of picturesque beauty spread before her on every side.

It is a rugged, wild scene, desolate and forbidding to the cautious mariner, who would not like to be caught there, be his vessel ever so stanch, in a blow from seaward.

The girl was a beauty, a diamond in the rough, for her face was not refined, yet brilliant, fascinating, and stamped with intelligence.

Her lips were red, full, and her teeth milk white; her eyes fairly blazed with brightness, and her hair was very long, braided neatly, and formed a coronet upon her head.

A sun-hat had fallen back upon her shoulders, held by the ribbon under the chin, her dress was homespun, plainly made, yet it fitted a perfect form, and her feet and hands were small, the

"SCHOONER AHoy! LUFF SHARP, FOR GOD'S SAKE!" YELLED THE OLD SKIPPER.

latter burned brown, the former incased in rough shoes.

She was plainly just what she seemed, a child of humble parents.

One hand rested upon a rifle, the butt of which was near her feet, and at her waist hung powder-flask and bullet-pouch, showing that she had been hunting, while a duck and several squirrels lying near, where she had thrown them, proved that she had been successful in her search for game.

"There is going to be a storm, for the gulls and sea-birds are coming landward," she said, gazing skyward.

"Ah! there is a duck," and instantly her rifle was raised, aimed, and the report followed, while a large duck came crashing through the foliage of a tree near, which she had shot while upon the wing.

Quickly she reloaded her rifle, picked up her game and started homeward, climbing the hill pathway.

Again she paused, as she reached a higher point, and exclaimed:

"Why, there lies a vessel in Devil's Punch Bowl."

"What can it be doing there, I wonder?"

"Well, if a storm comes up it is gone, so I'll leave my game here and go down and warn them of their danger."

Hanging her game on the limb of a tree, and throwing her rifle over her shoulder, she began the descent of the steep hillside, walking with the confident, swinging pace of a mountaineer, and a step that would have brought to grief one unaccustomed to such work.

A walk of a mile brought her to the rocky shore of a cove in the shape of a horseshoe, one end seeming to protect it from the sea.

There was no beach, only a rugged wall of rock, against which the sea beat ominously at all times, even in a calm.

The cove was some acres in size, and it was open water sailing in and out, it appeared.

The sound of hammers was heard on the vessel at anchor there, which was a trim-looking brig, and men were seen busy at work.

Placing her hands to her lips, the girl gave a loud hail:

"Brig ahoy!"

The noise of the hammers ceased, and a silence followed.

"Brig ahoy," she repeated.

"Ahoy!" called out a manly voice in response, and a young man sprang upon the bulwarks and looked shoreward.

"You are anchored in the Devil's Punch Bowl, and a storm is coming up," cried the girl, who was about a cable's length away.

"Ay, ay, miss, but is it not a safe harbor?" asked the young man.

"It is the very worst place to drop anchor on this coast, calm or storm," came the startling answer.

"We were run in here by a coast pilot, and he has gone ashore."

"He meant to wreck you, that is all."

"How can we get out?"

"I will pilot you if you will send a boat for me."

"Ay, ay, and many thanks," was the cheery reply, and ten minutes after the girl stepped on deck, and with her rifle over her shoulder walked aft to where stood the commander of the brig—he who had answered her hail.

He was a handsome fellow, hardly more than twenty-three, dressed in a most becoming sailor suit, and had the face of one of a frank, fearless, generous-hearted nature.

The brig was a vessel to charm the eye of a sailor. But she showed evidence of having seen rough usage of late, for her bowsprit had been torn away and her starboard bulwarks stove in.

It was upon these damages the crew were busy at work when the young girl had hailed.

"Well, my fair Lady Pilot, it is most kind of you to come and warn us of our danger, and then to volunteer to help us out of a bad scrape."

"You are very welcome on board my vessel, I assure you," and the young captain doffed his cap.

The maiden bowed in a cold way, looked squarely into the face of the young man and answered:

"It was by the merest accident that I saw you, as I was returning home from hunting, for I turned at the top of the hill to see if a storm was rising from seaward, and caught sight of your topmasts in this basin, so came to warn you."

"It was most kind of you, and I thank you most sincerely."

"I do not wish your thanks, sir," was the cool reply.

The young sailor was puzzled, for her words might mean that she wished something more substantial than thanks and words; but he determined to wait before he offered, and asked:

"Do you live on this coast, may I ask?"

"Yes, a mile away, upon the hill yonder just below that large lightning-riven pine," and she pointed to near the spot she had been when she discovered the vessel.

"And this is a dangerous harbor?"

"It is no harbor, but a death-trap."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"And yet a man brought me here, who called himself a pilot."

"When?"

"At dawn this morning."

"Describe him."

"He was very dark, almost the hue of an Indian, wore no shoes, a coonskin cap, and long hair, while his face was beardless and his eyes very bright."

"It was Crazy Wolf, a mad Indian chief of the Kennebecs, who lives a league away in a cave, hunts, fishes, and wrecks a vessel whenever he gets a chance, it is said, though he is never caught at it, and being a madman he has not been disturbed; but he is a very dangerous man and greatly feared."

"I think with cause, from what you say of him; but we collided, in the fog last night, with a small coaster, which did us the damage that you see, and fearing the brig was worse injured than she is, I hailed a fisherman that was out in his boat to run me to a harbor, where I could repair the mishap."

"He said he was a pilot, and brought us here. I paid him well, and he was to return to-night to take us out again."

"Crazy Wolf would never come back, except to get the spoils of your wrecked vessel, and to rob dead bodies as they washed up on the shore," was the girl's response.

"And you think we had best put at once to sea?"

"I know it, unless you are anxious to die."

"You can pilot us?"

"Yes; rig a bowsprit that will serve until I run you into a harbor near my home, where you will be safe, and my father can furnish you with what spars and timber you need."

"You are very kind, and I'll get the brig under way at once, for I notice now, with this slightly increasing wind how rough this cove is."

Orders were at once given to get up the brig's anchor and set sail, and soon after, with the strange and daring girl at the wheel the vessel headed out of the fatal anchorage, which was each moment becoming more wild under the incoming tide and increasing wind.

As though she had been reared upon the deck of a vessel, the girl handled the craft, and picked her way among the reefs with a nerve and skill that won the admiration of all on board.

Having gained a fair offing, she put her helm to port, and ran along the coast, rounded the peninsular arm of land before referred to, and dropped anchor just before sunset in a small and secure haven.

"You have saved our lives, fair girl, and served us well, so permit me to offer you this purse as a souvenir."

And the young captain held out in his hand a handsome silken purse, filled with gold.

"I will not take your money, sir, for I have all I need if we are poor people; but if you will give me that ring you wear, as a keepsake, I will gladly accept it."

It was a handsome seal ring—a bloodstone—massively set, and bore upon it a crest, with the motto:

"Semper fidelis."

Instantly he removed it from his finger, saying:

"You shall have it, though I prize the ring highly, it having been a birthday gift from my sister who, I am sure, will be glad to know that it goes to one who has saved her brother's life."

"Permit me, please," and he took the little brown hand and placed it upon her finger.

"Thank you! I will never part with it," she said, and then expressed a desire to go ashore; and the young captain accompanied her, to see if her father could supply him with the necessary spars.

He climbed up the steep pathway with her, stopped, as she requested it, to gaze at the sunset beauty of the scene, while she got her string of game, and then they walked on along the ridge to the home of the beautiful girl.

Her father sat before the humble but neat and cosy cabin, smoking his pipe, and a stout, fearless-faced, honest man he looked; while within was a woman in neat attire, busy about the hearth preparing supper.

It was an humble fisherman's home, only neater and more comfortable than the ordinary, and contentment seemed to rest there.

The fisherman arose as he saw his daughter advance, and politely saluted the visitor, while he said:

"My glass showed me my girl at the wheel, sir, and I guessed as how she'd found you in a bad anchorage, and a storm to break before midnight."

"But we'll have supper soon, sir, for wife's about ready, and you must eat with us, for you're welcome."

The young girl had gone into the house with her rifle and game, and remaining outside with the fisherman, the big captain soon found that he had just what he needed, and they walked out along the ridge, hailed the vessel, and told the mate to send ashore and get the spars and planks, which were at a spot on the beach that the fisherman pointed out.

Then the sailor returned to supper, and a substantial, tempting meal it was, with fresh fish, just caught, boiled birds, which the young girl had shot in the morning, roasted potatoes, hot biscuit, coffee and honey.

Some time after supper the sailor took his leave, the fisherman going with him, and receiving most liberal pay for his spars and plank-ing.

Then he started ashore, with the remark:

"Drop another anchor, sir, is my advice, for though you are in a snug harbor, this is going to be an awful blow, or signs deceive me."

The young sailor obeyed the injunction and made all shipshape, for he saw that the heavens had become overcast, and the wind moaned with real viciousness in the pine ridge overhead.

Toward eleven o'clock the young captain sat in his cabin, reading, while he felt the brig rocking upon the increased swell.

The winds were whistling through the rigging, and the watch on deck were very willing to seek what shelter they could find, while the mate, with his face buried in the collar of his storm-coat, and his tarpaulin pulled down over his eyes, was leaning over the starboard bulwark amidships.

He did not see a dark form come over the opposite bulwark, slip lightly upon deck, stand a moment, as though taking observations, and then glide aft.

Into the cabin the form went, and glancing up, the young sailor started as though he beheld an apparition, while he sprang to his feet with the remark:

"You here?"

"Yes; and, as you see, I am dripping wet, for I swam out, got into the boat alongside, and then on board. I dared not come out in my skiff, as I would have been seen by men watching on the shore."

"You swam out to the brig? Your appearance indicates that," and the young sailor looked at the dripping form of the strange girl.

"If I had attempted to come in a boat, I would have been stopped."

"And why?"

"Crazy Wolf was foiled by your leaving the Devil's Punch Bowl, and he got a number of reckless men together, and intends to come out and capture your brig to-night."

"Indeed!"

"It is true."

"He will meet with a warm reception, I assure you."

"You have but nine men on board, and he will come with three boat-loads—over twenty—all well armed."

"We must face him at all odds," was the calm reply.

"No; get your anchor up, and I will run you up the river out of danger."

"I thank you, miss, but I will not leave my anchorage, but remain to beat off this pirate herd."

"I shall be ready for their coming, through your warning, and I have no fear of the result, for, all told, we are eleven men on board; but permit me to send you ashore."

"No, indeed, for that would spoil all. I will slip over the side and swim back."

"I dislike to have you do that."

"I do not mind it in the least, and I will wait on the cliff to see the attack."

"How did you find this out?"

"I was sitting on the cliff, when Crazy Wolf and the two men came along, and not seeing me, they talked over the plot."

"The Indian said you had a rich cargo, and for them to collect certain men he named, to meet there on the shore, and they would take father's boats, and attack when the storm broke. He said there would be about twenty of them."

"When they had gone, I came to warn you."

"You are a noble girl, and again you place me under the deepest obligations to you, and I wish you would frankly tell me what I can do in return."

The girl was silent an instant, and then said:

"Sometimes come to see me."

"It will be a pleasure for me to do so," and he led her on deck, bade her farewell, and saw her go over the side into the sea, striking out with bold and fearless stroke through the darkness and rough waters.

On her departure the young captain called up his crew, told them of their danger, armed them thoroughly, and loading the two small guns, which was the armament of the merchant brig, after which they all stood on watch.

Soon the storm broke with savage fury, and the roar of the surf upon the other side of the peninsula was deafening.

Large trees were torn down upon the ridge, and were hurled crashing down the steep bluff, while stones, loosened by the force of the wind, bounded down the hillsides into the harbor beneath.

Walls of water being driven in from the sea, the little cove became choppy, causing the brig to tug hard at her anchors, while the blasts shrieked through her rigging.

"We are safe here, but how quickly we would have been wrecked in that other cove!" said the

captain to his mate, and then, as a flash of lightning lit up the scene, he cried:

"There are the boats coming off, and they are bunched together and full of men."

Springing to one of the six-pounders, loaded with grape, he leveled it in the direction where he had seen the boats, and waited.

Soon another flash came; he got the locality in his eye, and quickly aimed and fired.

The red glare of the gun, the deafening report, the crash of timbers and shriek of men all mingled together with the howling of the storm and pounding of the sea to swell the appalling chorus.

But, when another flash of lightning came there were visible two boats pulling rapidly shoreward, and the brig's crew broke into a loud cheer, for it told them that one had gone down under the deadly aim of their young commander.

Another shot was fired after the flying boats; then the brig's captain felt that there was no more danger from his foes, as they knew he was on the watch for them.

The storm, though fierce, was of short duration, and the seamen worked hard at repairing damages. Shortly after sunrise the brig got under way, and heading out of the harbor, stood on up the river to her destination, while on the cliff stood the young girl who had saved her from wreck, and her crew from death, gazing after her with a sad, lingering look, while tears stood in her beautiful eyes, for the gallant craft carried with it the heart of the untutored child of the forest and the sea.

What of misery or happiness her love brought to her the sequel will show.

CHAPTER I. THE CURSE.

"TRACEY TEMPLETON, will you marry the girl I have selected as the one to be your wife?"

"No, father, I will not."

"Boy, beware, for you know not to what extreme you may drive me."

"Father, do you not think you may drive me to an extreme in marrying one whom I do not love?"

"Love! Nonsense! What has love to do with it? I never loved your mother, and surely we were happy enough."

"No, father, you were contented, for you were wrapped up in your business, and thought of nothing else, and mother died of a broken heart, for she married you for your money, and gave up, at the demand of her parents, the one she loved, who was a poor man."

"Upon her dying bed, mother told Lucette and I the story of her life, and implored us never to marry one we did not love."

"Boy, you will drive me to madness, by your stubbornness."

"Come, let me tell you that Ellen Vancouver has a clean hundred thousand dollars to bring to you, for her father told me yesterday, that upon the day before you married his daughter, he would place in my hands that sum in cash to invest for her as I deemed best."

"Father, I am captain of the trimmest merchant craft that sails out of Boston, and I make a handsome living, saving up a little money, even though I am a trifle wild when in port."

"The vessel is yours, I admit, and yet, you have promised me a partnership in your firm some day; but I will sacrifice all, give up my vessel, and begin life anew, before the mast if need be, rather than bind myself to Ellen Vancouver, who is proud, heartless, and I do not believe is one to make any one happy."

"She loves you to desperation."

"I do not believe she loves any one, but herself, and the attentions I have shown her have been merely those of a long friendship between our families. No, sir, I will not marry her."

"Then you bring ruin upon me, your sister and yourself, for we all go down together."

"I do not understand you, father."

"Simply then, that I am financially at sea, having lost through speculations, and I have over ninety thousand dollars out in notes coming due, which I cannot renew, as it would bring the crash to ask it."

"This hundred thousand of Ellen Vancouver would put me on my feet again, and I would soon be all right financially."

"Now, marry her, and save me, save our home, and your inheritance, or refuse and bring ruin."

"Father, I am deeply pained to hear of this; but if the crash comes I can work for you and sister Lucette, and it will be far better than to marry that girl."

"And yet her father will leave her nearly a million, and he is on his last legs."

"I do not care, sir, I must refuse to be sacrificed. My mother's life was a lesson to me."

"Curses upon your mother!"

"Hold! Not a word against that noble woman, now lying in the grave of your digging, for you broke her heart, or I will forget that your blood flows in my veins. Curse me, father, but let my mother in her grave sleep in peace!"

"Then I do curse you, degenerate, cruel boy! I curse you now and through life, and may you be an outcast upon land and sea, and go down to your grave unloved and unmourned!"

"Go, go from me forever, for you have brought ruin upon me, and my blood never forgets or forgives an injury."

"Go."

The young man staggered back before the fury of the passion-frenzied old man, and, livid, trembling at the bitter curse hurled upon him, placed his hands over his face and fled from the room.

CHAPTER II. THE TEMPLETONS.

No bluer blood was there in New England than that which had flowed for long generations in the veins of the Massachusetts Templetons.

They had come to America in the seventeenth century, a man and his wife, exiles, it was said, from England, but why, no one ever knew.

They had money, and settled in Boston, and from them sprung the father and son who are introduced in the opening chapter of this story.

The men of the family were naturally stern, cynical and given to keeping their own counsel, while the women were beautiful in face and form, gentle-natured, loving and true as steel.

From father to son had descended fortunes, gotten in the merchant service, and Leonard Templeton had the accumulation of his forefathers, since the first one had come to America.

He had also married a fortune, brought to him by a lovely girl, whose heart had been broken by his stern nature and treatment of her, for she had become his wife to please her aged parents, and sacrificed her love to do so.

Under the management of Leonard Templeton the estate had dwindled away, for he was a bold speculator, and at last he had gotten himself into a trouble that he could not extricate himself from, unless by forcing his son to marry Ellen Vancouver, a girl who was just what Tracey Templeton had said she was—vain, proud and heartless, though a brilliant woman.

The only children of Leonard Templeton were a son and daughter.

Tracey was a handsome, frank-hearted young man of twenty-three, at the opening of this story, and every one liked him.

He had been sent to college by his father, after, as a boy, he had made a number of cruises in the firm's vessels; but had preferred a life on the sea, and so had obtained the berth of supercargo.

Wishing to become a seaman, he had, on a voyage to China, gone before the mast the moment the port of Boston had been dropped astern, and there did his duty as a common sailor until the vessel returned home again.

Then he sailed as mate of a coasting schooner, and next as captain of a brig, which his father had just built for him, and he had made several voyages in her to the West Indies and Southern ports, up to the time of his stormy interview with the old merchant, and it was said by those who sailed under him, that no pluckier or better skipper ever left the harbor of Boston.

His sister, Lucette, was a girl of seventeen, at the opening of this narrative, and a more exquisitely beautiful girl no one would care to know.

Her nature was full of sunshine, her heart overflowing with nobleness and love for all the world, and her idol was her handsome brother, "Captain Tracey," as he was generally called, while her father's stern manner caused her to stand in awe of him.

But he loved his children, in spite of his cold nature and stern bearing, and Lucette was as the apple of his eye.

The home of the Templetons was on the bay shore, near the city, and surrounded by broad acres of park-land, flower gardens, lawns, and sloping to the water's edge, it was a neat charming retreat, while the mansion was imposing in size, elegantly furnished and the equal of an English baronial manor-house.

In a stately way Leonard Templeton entertained at his house, known as the Seaside Temple, and visitors were made happy through Tracey and his sister; but there seemed a chill to rest upon all enjoyment when the old merchant was present.

He was reported to be fabulously wealthy, and he liked to have people believe so, for he was very purse-proud, avaricious, aristocratic and anxious to be talked about.

For his pride to have a fall, for his fortune to be swept from him, and to have to live like a poor man, he felt would kill him, and so he determined to sacrifice his son to save himself; but the determined stand taken by Tracey Templeton had thwarted the old man, and, with ruin staring him in the face, he had uttered the bitter curse upon his son, that he might become a vagabond upon the earth.

For a long time after the departure of his son, shuddering under the bitter curse hurled upon him, Leonard Templeton paced to and fro in his elegantly furnished library.

He was not one to retract, and he meant all that he had said.

He knew not what his son might do, nor did he care, for his thoughts were all for himself.

"One month more and I am ruined," he groaned.

"No! no! no! I must not go to the wall, for there is one chance left."

"I will sacrifice Lucette," and he pulled the bell violently, and said to a servant who appeared:

"Ask Miss Templeton to come to me here at once!"

CHAPTER III.

THE SEA TRAGEDY.

SOME three months prior to the introduction of the Templetons to the reader, Lucette, one pleasant afternoon, got into her brother's sloop yacht, with the old boatman of the place, to carry over to the fort the daughter of an army officer, who had been on a visit to her at Seaside Temple for a few days, and who was her schoolmate at the fashionable boarding-school they both attended in Boston.

Skipper Dick was an old sailor, who had once commanded a coasting-vessel belonging to merchant Templeton, but who, as he grew in years, was content to accept the berth of boatman at Seaside Villa.

He was an experienced hand with a boat, cautious, and no accident had ever occurred while his hand held the tiller.

The two maidens enjoyed the sail immensely, and it was sunset when the yacht started upon her return, with Skipper Dick at the helm, and Lucette seated near, gazing on the banks of clouds piling up in the west.

"We'll get home afore the storm breaks, miss," the skipper had said, and Lucette thought of no danger.

She was certainly a beautiful girl, as she sat there, with the twilight glow full upon her face.

Her complexion was perfect, her eyes deep blue, and expressive to a wonderful degree, while her rosebud mouth showed character strangely marked in one of seventeen, and reflected the pure soul within.

Dropping the island port rapidly astern, the yacht sped on its way, the wind fair for the run, and the old skipper doing all he could to reach home before the storm should break upon them.

"It will catch us, Dick, for the wind is switching around and will head us off," said Lucette, who was a good sailor herself.

"Yes, miss, we'll have to beat the last mile, I guess, and I only hope we won't get breeze enough to have to reef."

"We will though, for those are angry clouds; but we can reef in ample time, I think, and I'll not mind a little rough work."

"I think you like it, when it's piping a gale, miss."

"I did once, but I'm too old now, and I guess it won't be long afore I drops anchor for good."

"Does you ever have presentiments, Miss Lucette?"

"Oh, yes, Captain Dick, sometimes I have such feelings come over me, but I cast them off, as you must do."

"I can't, miss, for I has felt o' late, that altho' I has given up following the sea as a sailor, I will yet go down to my grave there."

"But I've had a long cruise, Miss Lu; nigh on to seventy year my voyage of life has lasted, and it's time I was looking for my last haven."

"I has no kith or kin; no one to miss me, and the little property I got for my wife, 'way down in York city, hain't worth much; but I leave it all to you, miss, and my papers so says; but hain't that a beautiful schooner, miss? and she's armed too."

The old skipper pointed as he spoke to a schooner that was going up the harbor, and must soon pass across their bows.

"She is indeed a beauty, Dick, and she fairly walks through the water; but see, there is another coming in the opposite direction, and we must be careful," and a large merchant schooner going out, also came into view.

"And there's the change of wind, miss, so I'll luff sharp and reef."

The wind had lulled for an instant, and then, with an angry gust had come from the other direction, and Skipper Dick quickly luffed, and both he and Lucette set to work to reef close, for they felt they would get it fierce out of the westward before many minutes.

They had just completed reefing and were about to resume their seats, when off across the waters came a hail in a manly, commanding voice:

"Ho, that schooner ahoy! Luff sharp, or you'll run down that little sloop!"

With a cry of alarm Lucette looked up, to find the merchant schooner, sailing seaward, almost upon them.

Dick saw that he could do nothing, his boat not yet having fallen off and caught the wind in her sails:

"Schooner ahoy! Luff sharp, for God's sake!" yelled the old skipper.

The bows of the schooner swerved one way then another, as though the man at the wheel had lost his head, and then, as a furious squall filled her sails, she dashed directly down upon the little sloop.

There was a cry, a crashing of timbers, gurgling of waters, shouts from the schooner's crew, and she passed on, leaving wreck and death astern of her.

"I told you so, Miss Lu! Good-by!" cried

old Dick, who was badly hurt, and he almost at once sunk in the foaming wake.

Lucette had been thrown to one side; she sunk beneath the waves for an instant, and then rose to the surface and struck boldly out to save herself, for she could swim well; but her clothes dragged heavily, the shock of seeing old Dick drown, and the excitement unnerved her, and she felt herself sinking, when suddenly there came the sound as of many wings in the air, and the same manly voice that had given the first warning, called out:

"Hard—hard down your helm!"

She beheld the sharp bows of a vessel swoop up into the wind, away from her, saw a form leap into the sea, and a moment after an arm encircled her, while the same voice said:

"Do not be alarmed, lady, for you are safe now."

Then she swooned away, and when she recovered consciousness she was in the cabin of a vessel.

It was a warlike-looking cabin, elegantly and oddly furnished, and three persons were near her.

One was an old negress, with her head encircled by a red bandana, and a mass of curious beads around her neck, while she spoke in a strange tongue to an officer who sat near, for he wore an undress uniform.

A second officer, one who wore a heavy beard, tinged with gray, held her pulse, and she heard him remark:

"She will come round all right, captain, never fear; but it was a close call to death."

Upon the face of the man addressed as captain she turned her eyes, as he answered:

"Use all your skill, Surgeon Nelton, for she must not die—she *must* live!"

The speaker was a man of thirty odd, tall, well-formed, naturally graceful in every movement, and with a face of refinement, as dark as a Spaniard's and as cruel as a Comanche's.

"I owe you my life, sir," said Lucette, with a shudder she could not keep down.

"I am the debtor, lady, in having saved you from death. I am sorry your companion was less fortunate," was the response.

"Poor old Skipper Dick! He was the boatman at my home, and only a short while before we were struck said he had a presentiment his end would soon come, and he would die in salt water."

"It was strange that the schooner should not have seen us, for our lights were up."

"These coasters are always careless, lady, and he lost his nerve when he did see you, and cut your vessel in two, so that she went down to the bottom at once."

"I saw what would come, so headed for you, and, fortunately, saved you, for I had been watching your little vessel through my glass."

"May I ask where I am to land you, although you are welcome to my cabin as long as you please to remain."

"Oh, I thank you, sir; but my home is near here, unless I have been long in a swoon."

"It is Seaside Temple, and I am Lucette Templeton."

"My name is Frank Fanchon, lady, and I am captain of this cutter, which is in the West India trade, and consequently armed, for we have pirates to head off in these Southern seas."

"I will at once put the schooner away for your home, which is doubtless the elegant mansion for which your boat was heading when I sighted you," and Captain Fanchon went on deck and gave the necessary orders to run in to an anchorage.

It was now blowing a gale, and the night was very dark, but Lucette threw the cloak of the schooner's captain about her, and went on deck to tell the helmsman how to head.

In its cupola Seaside Temple had a light, which had caused seamen to call it Beacon Manor, and so Lucette knew well how to steer, and before very long the schooner dropped anchor under the lee of the land, and within a couple of cables' length of the mansion.

Mr. Templeton and half a dozen servants were on the dock, anxiously looking for the returning yacht, and when the schooner's boat landed and Captain Fanchon handed Lucette ashore, she sprang into her father's arms and burst into tears.

In a few words her story was told, and, without a word of pity for poor old Skipper Dick, Mr. Templeton said:

"I can never repay you, sir, by thanks for what you have done to-night; but I hope you will be my guest to-night, that we may become the better acquainted."

Captain Fanchon demurred, saying something about having to run up to the city; but Lucette urged and he accepted, and thus became a guest in Seaside Temple.

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING SUSPICION.

ON account of the shock she had received Lucette retired early to her room, and as it was the habit of Mr. Templeton to be in bed by ten, he also excused himself to his guest, and the latter was shown the very lonely apartment which was one of the spare chambers of the mansion.

For a while Captain Frank Fanchon paced to

and fro, evidently in deep thought, and then he gently opened his door and looked out into the hall.

All was dark there, and he said:

"I do not care to disturb the family, so I will seek some other way out."

He went to the window and saw that it looked out upon the lawn, not more than six feet below him.

Gently raising it, he leaped out upon the sward, and then stood motionless, gazing about him.

The mansion was dark, not a light visible in it excepting the beacon on the cupola.

Keeping in the shadow of the walls he went to the front gravel walk, and thence down to the shore.

A shrill whistle, which he gave by putting the end of a stiletto to his lips, received an answer from on board the schooner, and soon after a boat put ashore.

Springing into it he was rowed out to the vessel, and an officer met him at the gangway.

"I feared you had given up the trip, sir," said the officer.

"Oh no, Farwell, I am not one to break my word, and I told Marcy I would be there without fail."

"Then I shall get up anchor, sir?"

"Without a moment's delay, for I must be back here before dawn."

"Back here, sir?" and the officer seemed surprised.

"Yes, for I return to my anchorage here," was the response, and Captain Fanchon entered his cabin.

Ten minutes after the schooner went flying up the bay toward the city, under a single reef, for the wind yet blew half a gale and the waves ran high; while the night was very dark.

It was nearly midnight when she sailed, and five hours elapsed before she returned to her anchorage.

Going on shore Captain Fanchon reached his window, and entered his room, just as the gray dawn began to appear.

To undress and spring into bed was but the work of a few minutes, and he was almost instantly asleep.

It was the custom of Mr. Templeton to rise at seven o'clock every morning, and when the weather was pleasant, to take a stroll in his grounds, returning to breakfast with his daughter at eight, after which he drove to the city to business.

He had slept a trifle late, perhaps owing to his having sat up an hour longer the night before, and upon going out upon the piazza beheld not only the schooner of Captain Fanchon lying at anchor in the little harbor, but a vessel he well knew as the revenue cutter coming in, with guns run out, and evidently in fighting trim.

At once he hastily went down to the little pier, just as he heard the stern hail from the cutter:

"Ho that schooner!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the response.

"What schooner is that?"

"The Restless of Jamaica."

"Why are you armed?"

"We trade in dangerous seas, and have a permit from the British Government to be armed."

"You are a pirate, and I demand your instant surrender!" came the startling words, and the cutter ranged, and headed across the bows of the schooner.

"Ho, Chester! you are mistaken about that craft!" called out Mr. Templeton, from the shore, recognizing the young commander of the cutter, which was now close inshore.

The young officer at once gave an order to luff sharp, and, seeing no evidence of resistance on board the schooner, raised his hat to the merchant, and called back:

"Good-morning, Mr. Templeton, I am in search of a pirate vessel that ran into the harbor last night, sacked the home of Judge Shelley of all its plate, cut out the richly laden barque Mogul, just arrived, and then mysteriously disappeared, and it was said the daring buccaneer had a schooner that answers the description of yonder craft, and was last seen running out along this shore, the prize having been sent to sea ahead of him."

Such was the surprising story told by Captain Chester, and it caused Mr. Templeton to feel a little uneasy, while he said:

"I wish you would come ashore a moment, Chester, for the schooner cannot escape you, and I wish to talk with you."

"Ay, ay, sir! I'll be with you at once," and soon after Loyd Chester sprang ashore from his gig.

"Captain Chester, your story is a startling one; but I feel assured you are wrong regarding that craft, for her commander came into port early last evening, saved Lucette from drowning, and then became my guest, and he is now asleep in his room in my house."

"Indeed! but are you sure he is there?"

"Walk with me to the mansion, and we can soon see," and on the way the merchant told the sailor of Lucette's narrow escape from drowning, the death of old Skipper Dick, and how Cap-

tain Fanchon had himself sprung overboard and saved her.

Loyd Chester was in love with Lucette himself, and he mentally anathematized his bad luck in not having rescued her, but he was a noble-hearted fellow, and said frankly:

"I do hope I am on the wrong track in suspecting such a brave man to be the one I am hunting for; but what is this captain's name?"

"Fanchon."

"And where from?"

"He is an Englishman of means, he tells me, but loves the sea, and built that schooner in which he trades about the world at will."

"He is a fine-looking man, courtly in his manners, and very entertaining."

"I am glad I did not make the mistake to open on him, as I intended, for I was sure I had the pirate, yet could not understand how he could be so reckless as to coolly anchor down here within a couple of miles of his daring deed of piracy."

"He robbed the home of Judge Shelley, you say?"

"Yes; and the poor old judge was killed in defending his property."

"Prior to this the pirate had boarded the Mogul, and in the darkness and storm cut her out, putting a prize crew on board and sending her out to sea."

"One of her crew escaped by jumping overboard, and he reported when he swam ashore, and he was sent in a patrol boat around to me, where I was at anchor in the Charles river."

"I got under way as soon as I could, and then discovered that Shelley Manor had been robbed, for we were hailed by a passing boat going for aid."

"Unfortunately the Vicious got aground, and it was a couple of hours before I could get her off, and day had dawned; but skippers in the harbor told me that they had seen the pirate running out, that he was a long schooner, with very tall and much raking masts, and a bowsprit that ran outboard exceedingly far and pointed up a great distance from the water."

"Now, yonder schooner has her topmasts housed, but they are tall and rake well, and her bowsprit does run far out and high, as you see."

"True, but she is not the pirate, I am sure."

"Now we will send for Captain Fanchon," and, calling a servant, the merchant bade him knock at his guest's door and say that he wished to see him.

"He will be with you soon, sir, the gentleman says," the servant said upon his return.

"Was he up, Dorcas?"

"No, sir, he was asleep."

"Ah! then I am mistaken, but I should like to see him," and Loyd Chester awaited impatiently until the appearance of the suspected guest.

"A courtly gentleman, very handsome, very *distingue*, but I don't like him," was Loyd Chester's mental criticism of Captain Fanchon, as he entered the library and was presented to him.

"I am sorry to say, Captain Fanchon, that I very nearly boarded your vessel a while ago, cutlass in hand, at the head of my crew; but fortunately Mr. Templeton called to me, and I feel that I have made a grievous error, so ask pardon for the trouble I have given you and your officers."

"I have nothing to forgive, sir, I assure you, unless it is the awakening me from a very sweet sleep I was enjoying."

"But may I ask why you were thus hostile toward me?"

"A piracy was committed in port last night, a richly-laden East Indian trader, just arrived, having been cut out from her anchorage and sent to sea, and the home of one of our honored and wealthy citizens was sacked, and he was slain, while your vessel was exactly described to me as the guilty craft."

Captain Fanchon laughed heartily, and as Lucette just then entered the library, looking very beautiful in her white morning dress, he turned to her and said:

"Miss Templeton, do you know that your pre-

servicer of last night has been taken for a pirate?"

"I think I shall have to hasten out of port before I am hanged at the yard-arm, and afterward tried for piracy."

Loyd Chester saw that the stranger meant the sarcasm for him; but assured that he had made a mistake, he made no disagreeable response, as he would like to have done, and refusing the request of the merchant and Lucette to remain to breakfast, took his departure, saying that he must go on the hunt for the pirate.

"I hope, Captain Chester, you will find him, if only that you may feel no lingering suspicion in your mind that I am the buccaneer," and Captain Fanchon bowed and smiled.

"I hope, sir, I will be so fortunate as to capture him, and if so I shall hang him," and Loyd Chester departed, while the others walked out upon the piazza and saw him go aboard his vessel, which dipped the American colors to the English flag at the schooner's peak as she sailed by, as though to atone for the mistake made.

Farwell promptly returned the salute, and the Restless remained peacefully at anchor, while the cutter, under full sail, stood out into the harbor in search of the daring pirate.

CHAPTER V.
THE EXILE'S LETTER.

THE day following the stormy interview with his son, after which, with his father's curse upon him, Tracey Templeton was driven from his home, the merchant drove into the city to his place of business.

There was a lingering hope in his breast that he would find Tracey at the office, willing to accede to his terms and marry Miss Vancouver, for the old merchant was proud of his handsome son and loved him as dearly as one of his sordid nature could feel affection for anything that was not gold.

But Tracey was not there, and the old man fretted during the day, hoping each moment that he would come in.

"I will give him until to-morrow, and then, if he does not come 'round, why, Lucette must save me," he muttered, as he got into his carriage to drive home.

Arriving at the door of the mansion, he was surprised to see the brig, commanded by his son, lying at anchor off-shore.

"This is strange, for she was not ready to sail, and had not an atom of cargo on board," he said.

"Ah!" he added, quickly; "that bad boy has come to tell me he will marry Ellen; but he could have run down in a small boat, or joined me at the office, without bringing the brig here."

"Miss Lucette would like to see you, sir, in her room," said Dorcas, meeting him at the hall-door.

"Why does she not come down to the library and to dinner?"

"She is not very well, sir."

"I'll go up to see her," and the merchant spoke in a gruff tone.

"Is Captain Tracey here, Dorcas?"

"No, sir."

"He has been here?"

"No, sir."

"The brig is at anchor off-shore."

"Yes, sir, and a cabin-boy came ashore with a note, but went back."

"Ah! where is it?"

"Miss Lucette has it, sir."

So up-stairs the old merchant went to Lucette's rooms.

There was a cosy sitting-room, with bedroom attached, and they were furnished with exquisite taste.

Lucette sat in an easy-chair, but arose as her father entered, and her beautiful eyes were red from weeping.

"Why, Lucette, what ails you, my child?" demanded the merchant, struck with the look of sorrow upon her lovely face.

"Father, brother Tracey has gone from us forever!"

The old man started, but said, sullenly:

"Let him go."

"Oh, father!"

"He is an undutiful son, and refusing to obey me, I told him to go—ay, and to take with him my bitterest curse."

"Father!" and the girl was startled at the vehement manner and angry look of the man who seemed to gloat in bestowing a curse upon his own flesh and blood.

"I mean it, girl, and if he has had the good sense to go, so much the better, for I will not have to put him out. But, how know you this?"

"Here is a letter from him."

"To me?"

"No, sir, to me."

"Read it."

With a choking back of her emotions, Lucette read aloud:

"ON BOARD BRIG LUCETTE, }
Friday morning."

"MY DARLING LITTLE SISTER:—

"I send you this letter by cabin boy, Paul, and when it reaches your hands I will be far away from you, for I sail to-day in a vessel bound to Spain, and from there God only knows where I will go and where end, for I am weighted down with a father's curse, and his prayer that I may become a very out-cast upon the earth."

"Bound to one, I would not perjure my life by marrying another, and hence the trouble; and an exile I go, with the world before me, and a burden of sorrow to bear, a father's curse dogging my steps by night and by day."

"There is a secret in my life which I meant to tell father, but I could not then, so I bear it in my heart. To leave you, my darling sister, is a bitter regret, and I would leave you my blessing, only I fear one that is accursed can never bless."

"I feel almost desperate, and yet I am calm—strangely so, and I am putting my affairs in order, as though it were to meet death."

"I leave to you, my sister, my interest in the brig, and any share I might legally claim in my father's estate, should he die."

"I do not leave for him my forgiveness, for he has made me desperate, and I know not what his curse may drive me to."

"The brig, her papers and all on board, I leave at anchor in front of the mansion, once my home, and he will find all correct as to my stewardship of our mutual interests."

"Now, my dear sister, I bid you farewell, perhaps never to see you again."

"Your unfortunate brother,
TRACEY TEMPLETON."

"P. S.—If proof should ever be brought you of my death, open the within letter, and obey, for a

dead brother's sake, the request I make therein; but not until you *know* that I am dead, for then only could I have you aware of one secret of my life which I have kept from you."

"That is his letter?" said the merchant, when Lucette had at last finished reading it.

"Yes, father, and he will never come back," she sobbed.

"He had better not; but, where is this letter he speaks of, with a secret in it?"

"I have put it away, father."

"Get it, and I'll see what it is."

"No, father, it was sent me in confidence."

"Give me that letter, girl!"

"No, father, I cannot."

"Do you refuse to obey?" and the merchant's face grew livid with anger.

"In that only, father; I will not betray the confidence brother Tracey has placed in me."

"Did you open the letter?"

"Father, do you think I could be so despicable?" was the indignant reply.

"Well, I will see it."

"Father, you may as well understand me, sir, for I swear to you that I would rather die than yield up that letter; ay, I would go forth from this house, bearing the bitter curse you heaped upon my brother, before I would give it to you."

The merchant was astonished; was this his dove-eyed daughter?—this the maiden whom he felt that he could rule with a look, a word?

He saw her now in a new phase. Her face was bloodless, her eyes flashing, her lips quivering, and he felt that she meant just what she said.

He dared not drive her from him, for upon her depended his financial salvation; so he cunningly went to work to retrieve himself, and said:

"Lucette, you have shown a firmness I did not deem you possessed of, and I can but feel that you are right, for the letter is yours, not mine."

"Keep it, and if necessary, carry out the wishes of your erring brother."

"Now, let us dismiss him from our lives."

"Come, dinner awaits us."

Lucette was deeply grieved, and felt little like going to dinner; but she did so, and though quiet and sad-faced, she read to her father as was her wont in the evening, and then, at his request, rowed out with him on board the brig.

They found all on board in perfect order, and the first mate, Lucius Sheldon, a young sailor, a boyhood friend of her brother, in command.

The merchant looked over the papers, found everything correct, and then said:

"Mr. Sheldon, I make you captain of the brig, sir, and tomorrow morning I will come on board and sail back to your anchorage with you, at the same time giving you your orders."

"I thank you, Mr. Templeton, most sincerely, sir; but is not Captain Templeton's absence but temporary?"

"No, sir; it is for good," was the stern reply.

"I am sorry, sir—very sorry, for the captain was one we all loved."

"We will not discuss him, Captain Sheldon. You are captain now, and to-morrow you shall have your orders," and the merchant and Lucette went on shore again.

It was late, and both went to their rooms, the old man to drown his bitterness in slumber, and Lucette to take her seat by the window and gaze out upon the moonlit lawn and the waters of the bay beyond, dotted here and there by the snowy sails of some outgoing or incoming vessels.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERIOUS FLIGHT.

FOR a long time did Lucette Templeton sit at her window, gazing out upon the scene before her.

Now she seemed to realize its beauty, and her eyes roamed over the land and bay in appreciation of the view; but then again her brow would contract, her lips quiver, as thoughts of sadness flashed through her mind, and she would bury her face in her hands, rest them upon the window-sill and so remain for a long time.

The notes of a whip-o'-will came to her ears, and the sound but increased her sadness, and it seemed like it was a bird of ill-omen.

"Are those small boats, I wonder?" she said, as her gaze rested upon two dark objects out upon the water, coming toward the little harbor where the brig lay at anchor.

Just then an old negress entered the room, for she was a privileged character, having been Lucette's nurse and her mother's before her.

"Ah! Missy Lu, you must not sit up this way, for you make yourself sick. I heard yer sobbin', chile, as though yer heart would break, and just come in ter see if yer was sick."

The maiden arose and turned toward the good old negress, while she answered:

"I am sick at heart, Aunt Rachel—not bodily."

"What is the matter, dear chile?"

"Well, Rachel, father has quarreled with brother Tracey, and he has gone away, perhaps never to return."

"Marse Tracey gone, Missy Lu?" cried the old negress in surprise.

"Yes, he is high-spirited, and father was

cruel, if I must say so, and brother has gone, and that is why I am sad, Aunt Rachel, for I fear he may never come back."

"Don't you fret about Marse Tracey, Missy Lu, for he hain't gwine ter live without seein' you."

"No, no, he come back some day sure."

"He may be angry, maybe feel awful bad just now, and think he's gone for good; but blood is t'icker dan water is, Missy Lu, and Marse Tracey will come back to see you some day, for he lub you very dear."

"Ole massa am cross, I knows, and say harsh things sometime; but it all coming right, and you must not worry."

"Now go to bed, honey, and get some sleep, for it is long past midnight; but if you can't sleep, and wants me to be with you, jist call me, for I'm in my room near by, and hain't gwine ter let yer suffer all alone."

"I will retire soon, Aunt Rachel, and I thank you for coming in," and the old negress departing, Lucette resumed her seat at the window.

But hardly had she done so when she started, rubbed her eyes, stared out of the window, sprung to her feet and gave a cry that brought the old negress running back into the room and awoke her father upon the other side of the hall.

"Oh, missy! what ails you!" cried Aunt Rachel in terror, thinking the maiden had gone mad.

"Look! look! the brig is under sail, flying to sea!" she cried in a trembling voice.

Rachel sprung to the window, and saw that it was true—the brig was moving out of the harbor.

"Call father, Aunt Rachel, call father!"

But just then the merchant came into the room, in slippers, dressing gown and night-cap, and his face was white with alarm, for he knew not what had happened.

"Father, the brig is under sail! some one is running off with her."

"I saw two boats moving toward her, and filled with men, and then Rachel came in and I did not observe them for some time, so when I looked again the brig was going out of the harbor."

While Lucette spoke Mr. Templeton was gazing fixedly out of the window, and he saw that the brig was under way, and other sail was being rapidly set on her, while astern she was towing two boats.

At the same moment Lucette, who had seized a small spy-glass she kept in her room, turned it upon the brig, and said:

"Father, she has been captured, for there has been trouble upon her decks, as I see a number of men, evidently her crew, grouped together aft, and about them several men with muskets!"

Mr. Templeton gave expression to something very like an oath, and then sent old Rachel to arouse the coachman and get the carriage ready, while he said:

"I will drive immediately to town and report the affair to Chester, whose cutter lies off my pier."

Going to his room the merchant hastily dressed, and as he went down-stairs he found Lucette awaiting him, her hat and shawl on.

"Father, let me go with you, for I cannot sleep," she urged, and, really glad of her company he assented.

Soon the carriage drove up to the door, and Mr. Templeton said:

"To my pier, sir, as fast as you can drive."

Away sped the fleet horses, and never before had Charles the coachman driven his master to town in such a short space of time.

A watchman was found upon the pier, a boat was procured, and the merchant and his daughter were rowed out to the Vicious, which was at anchor a cable's length off-shore.

Answering the hail, with "I am Mr. Leonard Templeton, and wish to see Captain Chester without delay," the officer of the deck ordered the boatman to pull alongside, and Captain Chester was called, for only a short while before had he come on board, having been at a social gathering in town.

"This is indeed an honor, Miss Templeton, to see you on my vessel."

"Mr. Templeton, how can I serve you, sir, for I see that you have some cause for excitement?" and Loyd Chester turned from Lucette to her father.

"I have just come, sir, and have driven in especially to see you, for my brig was cut out of her anchorage an hour ago, and is now running out to sea, I suppose."

"Indeed, sir! but she must still be in sight."

"No, not from the anchorage near here, but from my mansion harbor, whither she came last night."

"But Captain Templeton, sir, where is he?"

"I know not, sir, for Mr. Tracey Templeton and myself have ceased to stand in the relationship of father and son, Captain Chester, and he has gone his way, and, egad! he may have taken the brig after all."

"Father! you know that brother Tracey would not do such a thing, for he turned over all her papers and everything to you, and gave to me his interest in her," said Lucette indignantly.

"I know not, Mr. Templeton, what your

cause of quarrel with Captain Templeton may be, nor is it any of my affair, but I am sure he is not the man to kidnap his father's vessel."

"Well, some one has done so."

"That is evident, but who?"

"I cannot tell."

"And can you think of no motive any one might have?"

"No, sir."

Loyd Chester had already given orders to get the cutter under way, and for a moment was silent.

Then he said slowly:

"Mr. Temple, that English trader is in port, I believe!"

"You mean Captain Fanchon, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, he arrived several days ago."

"Mr. Templeton, you must pardon me if I say I am a trifle suspicious of Captain Fanchon."

"Pray, sir, what has he to do with the matter in question?" almost angrily asked the merchant.

"Simply, sir, that he has been four times in this port, and each time there is something wrong."

"It may be an accident, happening so, and I may wrong him; but nearly a year ago he came first into port, and I am glad he did so, for he saved the life of Miss Templeton, but that same night an East Indian barque was cut out, and Judge Shelley's house was sacked, and he was killed."

"Again he came into the harbor, and the same night a West Indian brig was cut out."

"His third appearance, two months ago, was followed by the capture of the Portland packet, as she sailed out, by boats that hailed her, pretending to have passengers on board, and a hundred thousand dollars in gold was taken from her, and who got it no one knew."

"Now, Captain Fanchon came in three days ago, and here your brig is cut out, so I say I am suspicious of him."

"You do the gentleman great injustice, Captain Chester, for Captain Fanchon is now interested with me in certain business matters, and—"

"I hope, sir, I do him an injustice, and if so I am answerable for my words, should he learn how I feel; but I do not like him, nor do I trust him."

The merchant made no reply, until he took his departure soon after, and then he said:

"If you suspect Captain Fanchon, sir, of being other than he represents himself, it is your duty to look for proof and bring him to justice, for I assure you I do not wish business transactions with a man who is under the suspicion you hold regarding him."

"I shall investigate, Mr. Templeton, and right or wrong, I will report to you."

"Now, sir, I hope that we can catch your brig; but if she is, as they say, so very fleet, I doubt it, although the Vicious seldom has the heels of a craft shown her."

With a wave of the hand Captain Chester bade the merchant and his daughter farewell, and the Vicious went swiftly away in chase of the brig that had so mysteriously glided away from her anchorage off Seaside Temple.

CHAPTER VII.

MASKED MARAUDERS.

THE Vicious, as her captain said, was a fleet vessel, and she fairly flew down the harbor under the tremendous pressure of canvas put upon her.

Keeping well in toward the port shore, Captain Chester kept every man on the lookout for a sail, and ran by the little haven in front of Seaside Temple, without seeing any sign of a vessel moving on the waters.

The brig had now fully two hours' start of the cutter, if not more, and, with a good eight-knot breeze, was a long way ahead, if she had stood directly out to sea, instead of seeking a hiding-place somewhere in the lower harbor among the islands.

But Loyd Chester argued that if she had been cut out, it was for the purpose of changing her into a pirate, as her marvelous speed was well known, and she was the trimmest craft that sailed into Boston.

With this intention her captor would doubtless head seaward at once, to escape with his prize being his first object.

Out through the main ship channel then the Vicious headed, and met a vessel coming in.

"It is the New York packet, sir," said an officer who had a glass to his eye.

"Put her closer, helmsman, for I would speak her," ordered Captain Chester, and soon after he hailed:

"The Busy Bee, ahoy!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the skipper, recognizing the cutter.

"Do you know Templeton's brig?"

"The Lucette, sir?"

"Yes."

"I know her well, sir, and met her a while ago, a league to the southward of Brewster Islands, sir."

"Thank you. How did she head?"

"Southeast, sir, and going under all she could carry."

"Thank you," shouted back Loyd Chester, and his face beamed with triumph when he found he was at least on the right track.

Half an hour after, in the early dawn, some dark objects were seen on the sea ahead, and the lookout at the foremast-head, shouted:

"Boats, ho!"

"Ay, ay, I see them, and they are coming this way."

Soon it was seen that they had half a score of men in each boat, and were signaling the cutter as though fearful she would not see them.

It was now daylight, and as the brig luffed sharp, when near the boats, Captain Chester said:

"That is Captain Templeton's mate, Sheldon, in the leading boat."

"Yes, sir; it looks bad, does it not?" answered the officer addressed, while Loyd Chester called out:

"Ho! Sheldon, what is the matter?"

"The brig was cut out by a pirate, Captain Chester."

"Who was he?"

"I do not know, sir."

"How far ahead is he?"

"Fully fifteen miles, sir, and going like a race-horse."

"How many men?"

"Thirty, sir."

"How did they get aboard?"

"A man came to me, sir, in a skiff, with a letter, which I have here, from Captain Tracey Templeton, and it said he would send a new crew for the Lucette, and wanted me and my men for another vessel."

"I had just seen Mr. Leonard Templeton, and he had told me to take command of the brig; but I determined to wait until the captain came on board, and then tell him what his father had said."

"Soon after the boats hove in sight, and hailing them, a voice answered:

"It is I, Sheldon!" and I supposed it was the captain, and they boarded."

"I had but four men on deck at the time, for I was not expecting trouble or treachery, and I was felled to the deck, and in an instant we were seized and ironed."

"This is a strange story, Sheldon."

"Indeed it is, sir; but strangest of all was the fact that all of the pirates were masked and armed to the teeth."

"And Captain Templeton?"

"I cannot believe that he was one, sir, and so set it down that the letter was a forgery, and the trick a clever one to get the brig by acting in his name."

"We were then put under guard, and the brig was gotten under way, and headed out to sea."

"And then?"

"The captors wore their masks until we were placed in their two boats, two hours ago, and told to pull for port, which we did."

"I cannot understand it; but pull on home and report to Mr. Templeton, and I will see if I can catch the brig."

"No, sir, for she sails like a witch, and I don't think she can be caught easily."

"I'll try."

And on the brig went, while Sheldon pulled toward the harbor, and, being taken in tow by an in-going ship soon after, by noon landed at the little pier jutting out from the Seaside Temple lawn.

As Lucius Sheldon sprung ashore he was met by the merchant and Lucette, who had recognized him in the approaching boats.

"Well, sir, this is not the brig," said Mr. Templeton.

"No, sir; the brig was taken last night, as you doubtless are aware, by pirates."

"I received this letter, sir, half an hour before the capture, and so suspected no evil," and the young sailor handed to the merchant the letter to which he had referred, in speaking to Captain Chester.

"This is in the handwriting of my son—I mean Tracey Templeton," sternly said the Merchant.

"Yes, sir, and it seems strange, after what you have said, that Captain Templeton would have sent it."

"Read it, Lucette," gruffly said the merchant.

Aloud the maiden read as follows:

"TEMPLETON PIER.

"MY DEAR SHELDON:—

"I have decided to make a change of the crew now on the Lucette to another vessel, and will soon board you with the men I have."

"Those on board need not prepare to leave yet awhile."

"Will explain when I see you my reasons."

"Yours,

"TRACEY TEMPLETON."

"And he wrote you this?"

"That is his letter, sir."

"And he came?"

"No, sir; but expecting him, for I knew not what to do, and supposed, after all, you would understand it, I allowed the two boats to come on board."

"I did not observe, until too late, that the men were masked—"

"Masked?"

"Yes, sir, and I was struck down and ironed, and so were my men."

"Infamous! Has the boy turned pirate so soon?"

"What boy, sir?"

"Tracey Templeton!"

"Surely, Mr. Templeton, I did not consider Captain Templeton among the boarders."

"But he was, sir, for see his letter, and although professing to give me up the brig, he has kidnapped her."

"It is infamous in him!"

"I do not believe, father, that brother would be guilty of any act so vile," indignantly said Lucette.

"Nor do I, Miss Templeton."

"His letter betrays him, for here it is in his own handwriting; but tell me, Sheldon, what followed?"

"We were placed under guard, sir, while the pirates, for I can call them nothing else, got the anchor up and sail on the brig, and stood out to sea."

"And you knew none of them?"

"Not one, sir."

"Were there none there the size of my degenerate son?"

"Several, sir, but—"

"Well?"

"But they were all masked, and I could not tell, though I believe he was not among them."

"Who was their leader?"

"A tall man, sir, with broad shoulders and black hair, as I saw it under his mask."

"That fits Tracey Templeton, and he is the pirate."

"Father! father!"

"Silence, girl, for I know that your brother has done this, and his letter to you, and this one betray him."

"I will never believe it, sir."

"You may defend him, but I am assured of his guilt."

"Now, Captain Sheldon, I do not blame you, and you shall have the old brig, which the Lucette took the place of."

"She is a good vessel, fast, a trifle old, but she has been thoroughly overhauled, for I meant to put her in the New Orleans trade."

"Go on board of her and take charge, for there is only a watchman there now, and I will come to see you later in the afternoon."

So saying, the merchant walked toward the mansion, Lucette following, her face filled with sorrow.

After a hasty lunch, the merchant sprung into his carriage and was driven rapidly to town.

Having glanced over his letters there, he went out and ordering a boat, said shortly:

"Row me on board the schooner Restless."

"You mean the West Indian, sir, that folks says looks so much like a pirate?" asked the boatman.

"Yes."

Ten minutes after the merchant boarded the schooner.

Lieutenant Farwell met him at the gangway, and greeted him politely.

"Is Captain Fanchon on board, sir?"

"No, Mr. Templeton, he is not."

"When will he return?"

"Hardly before night, sir, as he wished to make some visits in the town."

"Ask him to come and see me at Seaside Temple as soon as he returns."

"I will, sir," and Mr. Templeton left the schooner and was rowed to the brig Venture, which he had just had thoroughly overhauled and refitted.

Lucius Sheldon was on board, and all looked shipshape, for the crew were hard at work.

"Ah! glad to see you so quickly in the traces, Sheldon; but tell me, what said Tracey Templeton when he set you and your men free?"

"I told you, sir, that I did not believe Captain Templeton to be one of the party; but the leader said he would hold us until too late to send a vessel on his track, and then we might return in his boats."

"That was all?"

"Yes, sir; he lay to just before dawn, and sent us off in the boats, and as the Boston lighthouse was in full view, I had no trouble in heading for the Narrows."

"Well, you have another craft now, so you can run up to the pier and get your cargo aboard when you please, as it is ready for you," and the merchant returned to his shore boat and was rowed back to the town.

Having attended to his business matters, he went home, and his face was so stern that Lucette dreaded to ask him if he had heard aught of her brother, and they sat down to dinner in silence.

As they arose from the table, the boatman who had taken Skipper Dick's place reported the cutter Vicious coming into the haven, and soon after Loyd Chester landed.

"Not a word, sir, of your vessel, for she dodged us before dawn in some way, or had had such a good start she was out of sight when the sun arose," said the young captain.

"I thank you, Captain Chester, for your services."

"I would like to have remained longer, sir, but have to go in the dock for repairs, and was forced to put back; but I hope some day to capture the brig for you, Mr. Templeton."

"Let her go, sir, for she will be the means of bringing my wicked son to the end of a rope, and if so I shall be content," was the cruel response of the father.

"It pains me to hear you speak so of Tracey, Mr. Templeton, for I have ever loved him as a brother since we were boys together, and cannot believe ill of him."

"Captain Chester, I had cause of quarrel with my son, and he deliberately refused to do as I wished, and hence I disowned him."

"He has gone, and already has put his neck in the noose by cutting out the brig, for I have a letter here which he wrote Sheldon, that compromises him, and another he wrote to his sister threatened to do some desperate act."

"He is no longer a son of mine, sir, and if you take the brig, I hope he will be on it, that you may do your duty and hang him as he deserves."

Loyd Chester shook his head sadly, and as Lucette did not appear, he returned on board his vessel and sailed for the dock, unable to believe that Tracey Templeton was what his unforgiving and stern father painted him.

CHAPTER VIII.

LUCETTE'S LOVERS.

AMONG the suitors for the hand of Lucette Templeton, not one was more sincere in his love than was the handsome young commander of the cutter-of-war Vicious.

He had fallen in love with the maiden when she wore short dresses, and had watched her with jealous eyes as she grew into womanhood.

Often and often had he wished that he could have been the one who had saved her life, that night when Skipper Dick was drowned, and not liking the commander of the schooner Restless, his dislike had grown almost to absolute hatred.

He had not been able to discover aught regarding the strange captain, and the idea would force itself uppermost in his mind that his schooner had the look of a pirate, and that he lived a life of most luxurious ease for a trading skipper.

He had met him in the club, where he had been introduced by Mr. Templeton, and found that Captain Fanchon was an expert at card-playing, for he seldom lost a game and won heavily.

He had seen that women were drawn to him, from some reason, and he was obliged to admit that Frank Fanchon was a very handsome, fascinating man, though he did not believe him a true one.

It seemed strange that each time his vessel appeared in port, something happened out of the usual run, for some bold act of outlawry was committed.

His vessel was armed as well as was the cutter, and he carried a crew of over two-score men, a large complement for a merchant craft, thought Loyd Chester.

Captain Fanchon was also a frequent visitor at Seaside Temple, when in port, and this Loyd Chester knew.

He did not appear to be a favorite in the eyes of Lucette, for the young cutter's commander watched them closely, but then he had saved the maiden's life, and that was strongly in his favor, especially when Mr. Templeton seemed to like the man.

Loyd Chester had never told Lucette of his love; but he meant to do so ere Captain Fanchon could offer himself, for that he had dared do so on so short an acquaintance he would not believe.

Another of Lucette's admirers was Marvel Shelley, the son of the judge who had been slain in defending his home against the pirates.

The son was away on that night, and his father was there alone, for his wife was dead and Marvel was his only child.

An only child he had been fretted and spoiled in boyhood, and in manhood had been dissipated, a card-player, and squandered his father's money until the old judge had threatened to disown him, and it was said, had his father not been slain as he was, he would have left another will, giving all of his property, which was very valuable, to charity, cutting Marvel off without a dollar.

But the judge's death prevented the making of another will, and the dissipated youth got his inheritance.

Strange to say the death of his father made a wonderful change in him, for he stopped his dissipation, gave up gambling, and in the time that had gone by had lived a most exemplary life.

Between Marvel Shelley and Captain Fanchon there seemed to have sprung up a close friendship, so Captain Loyd Chester remarked, and he could not exactly account for it, as there seemed to be little in common between the two men; but when the Restless was in port Marvel Shelley often dined on her, as did Captain Fanchon go frequently to Shelley Hall, the elegant home of the young Bostonian.

Although it was known that Judge Shelley

had been anxious to see his son reform and marry Lucette Templeton, and that the young man loved her, or pretended to, it was also understood that she avoided him on all occasions ere his reformation, but afterward had acted very kindly toward him.

Was it out of the goodness of her heart that she did so, or did she really care for him?

This no one could tell, but Marvel Shelley had become a great "catch" in town, and his society was sought after by mammas with marriageable daughters, for to be the mistress of Shelley Hall was something to be devoutly desired by many young girls.

A third lover of Lucette was Lucius Sheldon.

He came from a good New Hampshire family, had achieved a good education, but had taken to the sea as a means of supporting his mother after the death of his father, who, though considered rich, had left his family comparatively poor.

He had attended school in Boston, as a boy, and thus met Tracey Templeton and been invited home with him in the holidays, and thus it was that he had been offered a mate's berth in the brig by his old friend, who met him in a foreign port one day as second mate of a small trading-schooner.

Lucius Sheldon was no ordinary man, for he was well educated, had a frank face stamped with strong character, and his nature was generous to a fault.

He had fallen desperately in love with Lucette, but concealed his love until he could see in her some sign that she cared for him.

Lucette, with her beauty, her accomplishments, and her reputed wealth, young as she was, had a score of other suitors, but of these, Lucius Sheldon was not afraid.

Those he feared were Captain Fanchon, Marvel Shelley and Captain Loyd Chester.

"I could give her up for Chester if she loved him, but not to Shelley or Fanchon, for I do not believe they are good men and true," he had said to himself over and over again.

As for Lucette, she had really shown no decided preference for any one, though there were those who said the older man, Captain Fanchon, seemed to have an influence over her from some cause or other.

Perhaps it was because he had snatched her from a watery grave at the risk of his own life.

So matters stood at the time of the opening of this story, when Tracey Templeton was not only driven an outcast from his father's home, but was accused of having at once turned pirate, by cutting out the beautiful vessel formerly under his command.

"He is a vagabond by nature, and he will end at the yard-arm," the old merchant had grimly said when he bade Lucette good night, the evening following the flight of the brig from her anchorage.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MEETING IN THE CABIN OF THE RESTLESS.

A YOUNG man was coming out of one of the social resorts in Boston, the evening of the return of the Vicious from her unsuccessful chase of the runaway brig Lucette, when a chaise dashed by containing two persons, one of whom suddenly called to the driver to stop.

"Ho, Shelley, which way?" and there sprang out of the chaise the one who had spoken.

"Ah, Captain Fanchon, it is you?"

"How fortunate, for I had just tired of looking on at others enjoy themselves and was going to row aboard to see you; but where are you from?" and Marvel Shelley, a striking looking man of twenty-seven, grasped the hand of his friend.

"Oh, just been out in the country for a day; but let me dismiss my man and we will walk together to the dock, where I will hail my schooner for a boat."

The chaise driver seemed to go off well pleased with his fee, and with linked arms the two men set out for the pier off which lay the Restless.

A hail brought a boat ashore, and they were soon in the luxurious cabin of the schooner.

"Now I wish a good supper, Moro, and wine to wash it down, for I am as hungry as a bear, and set the table for two," said Captain Fanchon, addressing a large muscular formed negro who entered the cabin at his call, whom he addressed in Spanish.

"Si, senor," was the reply and the negro departed, while Captain Fanchon went into his state-room to freshen up his toilet, he said, as he had driven far.

Again seated with Marvel Shelley the latter said:

"Tell me, Fanchon, do you know aught of this quarrel between old Templeton and his son?"

"Not a word, and you surprise me."

"Well, it is hinted about the club to-night that old Templeton had a bitter quarrel with Tracey, who is, by the way, a splendid fellow, and it ended by his dismissing him."

"This is indeed news, and I regret to hear it, for, though I never met Captain Templeton, before my coming to port this time, I liked him immensely."

"But this is not all, for last night the old

man's brig was cut out from her anchorage and—"

"Do you mean it?" asked Captain Fanchon, with surprise.

"Yes, and I'm blessed if Templeton doesn't lay it upon Tracey, saying that he has doubtless turned pirate."

"The old shark! but how distressing this must all be to Miss Templeton."

"Indeed, yes, for it is the talk of the town, though no one believes that Tracey is guilty of any crime, unless his father knows more than he will tell, and I hear that Ellen Vancouver is inconsolable for his going, for she was fearfully sweet on Tracey, though she would not allow that icy heart of hers to show it."

"Miss Vancouver is very rich, I believe?" said Fanchon.

"Her old father is worth a neat million, if he is a dollar."

"She is very beautiful, too."

"Very statuesquely beautiful; but I like a little more of human nature, and not so much marble; but she's a splendid girl, I believe, and a good wife she would make you, Fanchon."

"Thank you, but my affections are centered elsewhere."

"Why not try Miss Vancouver yourself?"

"Egad, I love elsewhere; but if I failed there, I might try for the Vancouver, and believe I could win her, now that I have reformed."

Captain Fanchon was silent for a few minutes, and then said:

"What you tell me about poor Templeton distresses me greatly."

"As it does me, and all who know him."

"Where was the cutter when the brig was cut out?"

"Oh, she gave chase, as soon as she heard of it, for Chester is a stirring fellow after a foe; but then he had to put back, as he had sprung his mast, or some way got disabled, and the brig escaped."

"At any rate she is too fleet for any craft in these waters."

"She has never tried conclusions with the Restless," said Fanchon with a smile of pride as he glanced about his cabin.

"No, and this craft does look like a witch to sail."

"She is— Well, farewell?" and Captain Fanchon turned to his lieutenant, who just then entered.

"Captain Chester, of the cutter-of-war Vicious, to see you, sir."

"Admit him at once, and glad to see him," said Captain Fanchon, in a voice that reached the ears of Loyd Chester.

"And Mr. Sheldon is with him, sir."

"Glad to see both gentlemen," and Captain Fanchon met his visitors at the companionway and greeted them cordially.

"You both know Mr. Shelley, gentlemen?" and the three bowed pleasantly, for all were well known to each other.

"Be seated, gentlemen; and Moro, you black portrait of Satan, set other places at the table for my visitors, and bring more wine and liquors, you lazy dog!"

"Thank you, Captain Fanchon; but I will not stay long, for I have a great deal to do after I have asked of you quite a favor, which I may call upon you to grant?"

"Certainly, sir; if in my power, command me," was the prompt reply—so prompt that Loyd Chester gave a quick glance at Lucius Sheldon, who had hardly noticed the response, as he was busy muttering to himself:

"Four lovers of Lucette all in a heap. Who will win, I wonder?"

"The favor, Captain Fanchon, I must explain the asking of, by telling you that mine is the only vessel-of-war now in port, and likely to be for ten days or more; and to-day, in chasing Mr. Templeton's brig Lucette, which was cut out by pirates last night from her anchorage, I crippled my vessel so that I will have to get her repaired."

"I heard of that bold affair, sir, and wondered at it; but the brig was not at her usual anchorage, as I saw her leave it before sunset."

"She did, for she went to the haven near her owner's country seat."

"And I am deeply pained, also, to hear that there has been trouble between Mr. Templeton and his son."

"It is true, sir, I am sorry to say, as Captain Sheldon here can tell you, for the merchant made him captain in his son's stead; and I asked him to come with me to-night, as you might wish to learn how the brig was cut out."

"I would be glad to, for Shelley and myself have been discussing it."

In a few words Lucius Sheldon then told of the brig's capture, adding:

"It seems strange to me that Mr. Templeton, instead of trying to shield his son, endeavors, as it were, to make him out all that is bad."

"What he has done I cannot understand; but I believe him innocent of having committed any crime, and will never share in his father's belief that he was the masked leader of the pirates who took the brig."

"Nor can I, sir; but, Captain Chester, you have not asked that favor of me yet."

"It is this, sir, that, as my vessel is laid up, you will permit me should occasion offer to put to sea in your schooner, as she is armed, to run down any outlaw craft that may appear in the harbor."

"Willingly, sir."

"The Government will amply compensate you, sir, for—"

"No, no, Captain Chester, do not speak of payment, for I assure you it is a favor to grant your request, and you will find the Restless a fleet craft, well armed and equipped, and I will put no cargo in her for a couple of weeks, until you get the Vicious ready for sea again."

"If you wish my crew, I will place them at your disposal, with myself as your first officer, or you can send your own men on board, so suit yourself, and I will have all ready for you at a moment's notice."

"You are indeed most generous, Captain Fanchon, and I will only ask to use your crew, being glad of your services, and bringing only men I may need, and an officer or two, should I have to do so."

"The vessel is at your service, sir, with or without myself or men, captain, and so consider it, please."

"I have plenty of ammunition on board, and my schooner's wine cellar is well supplied, while the store-room is by no means scant, and all is at your service; but come, here is a sample of my living, and you must have supper with me, gentlemen."

It would have been impolite to refuse, and so Captain Chester and Lucius Sheldon passed an hour most pleasantly, and were compelled to vote Captain Fanchon, be he what he might, a most charming host.

At last they took their leave, and Loyd Chester said, as he rowed toward the brig, to leave his companion on board:

"I believe, Sheldon, I am wholly wrong; but, if I have to call on him, I will, and then I shall find out."

"I believe also that he is honest, Captain Chester, and he appears to be a splendid companion; but, then, I do not like him," was the reply.

"And I shall still watch him; but here you are aboard your vessel—so good-night," and the boat passed on, leaving Lucius Sheldon on his brig, while Loyd Chester remarked to himself:

"Well, if Captain Fanchon is what I thought he was, he is the boldest devil that ever crossed my bows in all my wanderings!"

CHAPTER X.

GAMBLING FOR A WIFE.

WHEN Captain Chester and Lucius Sheldon had left the cabin of the Restless, the captain of that mysterious vessel turned to his remaining guest, Marvel Shelley, and remarked:

"Now we can have a little chat all to ourselves, Shelley."

"I sincerely hope that nothing that is—well, say disagreeable, in the past will be the subject of conversation," the young aristocrat returned.

"Oh, no, for I live in the present, hope for the future, and have nothing to do with the past."

"That is the way I have solved the problem of earthly happiness, my friend."

"It is an easy way of putting it; but I can not be thus rough-hided, if I may thus express it, for what I have done in the past keeps close association with me in the present."

"You should not allow this, but cast it off."

"Yours is a strange nature, Fanchon, for here you live, unmindful of peril to name and life, and you are as calmly contented, to all outward appearances, as though you had never done a wrong act in your life."

"Certainly, for I do not admit of wrong-doing for the world to gaze upon; but let us talk of another subject."

"Well?" and the face of Marvel Shelley was clouded.

"I think of getting married."

"No!"

"True."

"I would not suspect it of you, though I have heard it rumored that you admired my lady love."

"Who, for instance?"

"Miss Lucette Templeton."

"My lady love, you mean, for but for me she would not now be alive."

"You saved her life, yes; but are you in earnest about admiring her?"

"Certainly, and why not? for she is beautiful, accomplished, rich, and every single man in Boston is anxious to marry her, which is what I like."

"Knowing yourself as you do, Fanchon, would you wish to bind that noble girl to you for life?" asked Shelley, seriously.

"Pardon me, while I ask if you would not marry her—if you could?"

"Why, yes, but—"

"But let me interrupt you, and ask if, knowing yourself as you do, Shelley, would it be right for you to ally that pure girl's life to your guilty one?"

The young aristocrat flushed and then turned pale, while he answered:

"It is different with me."

"You alone would see the difference, did we publicly compare characters."

An impatient imprecation came from Shelley's lips, and Captain Fanchon smiled and said:

"Shelley, let us understand each other, for I see that you wish to marry Miss Templeton."

"I do."

"Well, for the rest of her beaux I do not care a snap of my finger; but, I wish to show you more consideration."

"As how, pray?"

"Well, we are friends."

"Yes."

"As the world goes, we are, though I do not really think you care inwardly one jot or tittle more for me than I do for you."

"You are frank."

"It is the aim of my life to be."

"You have some scheme on hand?" and Shelley seemed cynical now.

"I have."

"Out with it."

"It will strike you, I think as reasonable."

"Well, sir?"

"I have already asked old Templeton for the hand of his daughter."

"Aha! and the result?"

"I was put off."

"I see."

"But I think I can win."

"The girl, or the old man?"

"Both."

"How?"

"That is my business, Mr Shelley; but the proposition I wish to make to you is to discover which of we two shall have the honor of making Miss Templeton his wife."

"I see."

"You will see better when I divulge my plan."

"For God's sake do it, then."

"You are a gambler, I believe?"

"I do not admit to it."

"True, but you are all the same."

"Yes, I play cards for money."

"Now I play also, as you may know, and I meet with general success; but upon the principle of honor among thieves, I seldom win from you, and I watch you too closely for you to win, except by good fortune from me; nay, don't get angry Shelley, for it will do no good."

"So it seems."

"Thus reasoning, a game between us is a square one, each skilled in tricks, but not sharp enough to deceive the other, and I propose that we play a game of cards for the hand of Miss Templeton."

"You mean the winner to have the full field?"

"Yes."

"And all aid from the loser?"

"What kind of aid?"

"Nothing said against him?"

"Certainly, for it would not be policy for one of us to act otherwise," was the sly reply of the sailor.

"Agreed."

"We will play now."

"As you please."

"The best two games in three?"

"Yes, that gives us both a better chance."

"Mind you, this gambling for a wife is a secret between ourselves."

"Of course."

"Are you ready?"

"I am."

The cards were then procured, the gamblers for a stake so strange, took their seats at the table, and the cards were carefully shuffled and cut for the deal.

It was won by Captain Fanchon.

"I tell you, Fanchon, I am playing for more than a wife," said the young aristocrat.

"How so?"

"Well, the inheritance I got from my father did not do much more than pay up my debts."

"I have Shelley Hall, it is true, and a small income of three thousand from rents, with a small bonus of cash in bank; but I reformed, and paid every dollar I owed, with interest, and this made me solid with all."

"I owe nothing now, but my father's estate was not as large as is believed, so I am anxious to add to it."

"I see."

"Now, Lucette Templeton, I hear, will get half a million as her dowry, and it is worth struggling for, while, as the old man has cast off his son, Tracey, she will get her brother's share too, I suppose, along with her father's when the merchant dies, so her husband will be in clover, and I shall be well content to live a better life with such a wife."

"And such a fortune?"

"Certainly, and you see what I play for."

"Yes, you have much at stake."

"And you only a wife, for you are rich."

"True; but now to our game."

The cards were carefully shuffled, dealt and then the game began.

Slowly it was played by Shelley, whose lips quivered at times, though his hands were firm.

As for Fanchon he seemed wholly indifferent, and smoked the while with apparent relish of his cigar.

Noting the quivering lips of his adversary, he said:

"Take a cigar, for it will calm your nerves."

The young man made no reply, but pouring out a glass of brandy, from a decanter, dashed it off, and then lighted the cigar; but still he seemed nervous.

"I have won," coolly said Captain Fanchon, taking up the cards and pushing them toward Shelley.

"One game," said the latter.

"Yes, but I have the prestige of the first game," was the reply.

Again the cards were dealt, and again the game was played through.

"And I have won," exultantly cried Shelley.

"Yes, we are even now."

"The next game decides."

"True."

Then the third game began, progressed slowly, and at its close Shelley said:

"You have won."

"Yes, and you will have to look up another heiress—Miss Ellen Vancouver for instance."

"Suppose Lucette refuses you, sir?"

"The field is of course open to you then."

"She may do so, or the merchant might."

"Yes, either or both might say no!"

"Then I—"

"But, remember, there is to be no underhand work, Shelley."

"Do you think—"

"I think nothing, I only warn you."

"You do not trust me."

"I trust no man whose life is what yours is, or mine."

"Well, you need not fear me, though I shall pray that you are not successful."

"Your prayers will not be answered, and soon you will know the result."

"The town will be shocked."

"Why?"

"No one knows you, you are a foreigner and a stranger, taking off our loveliest girl, and you are nearly double Lucette's age."

"It is June and October mingling, for she is about eighteen and I am thirty-five."

"Well, for your sake, I hope all will go well, but for my sake I hope not."

"Now I must go."

"Won't stay all night?"

"No, I had best go home, but will see you at the Club to-morrow night."

"I'll be there."

"By the way, should I wish to marry the Vancouver, could I get a little ready money from you?"

"I guess so; but we will see."

Marvel Shelley then took another glass of brandy, lighted a fresh cigar, and took his leave, the captain sending him ashore in his gig, and soon after he was driving out to his handsome home on the harbor shore, greatly disappointed at the way matters were going, for he said through his shut teeth:

"That Fanchon will win, for he is a man to accomplish all he undertakes; curse him!"

CHAPTER XI.

GIVEN FOR GOLD.

THERE seemed to rest upon the town of Boston, about the time of which I write, a certain feeling of unrest.

The death of Judge Shelley, and the sacking of his home, had not been forgotten, and there had been a number of piratical acts committed that gave people a fright.

A large packet out of town, with many people on board, had been wrecked, and it was said that a fleet buccaneer was constantly hovering in the offing to do what damage he could to shipping.

The Vicious was known to be laid up, and there was no vessel to call upon in case of need for a cruiser.

Then the quarrel between Mr. Templeton and his son was a mystery that no one could solve, and the idea would gain ground that he had cut out the brig Lucette and meant to turn her into a rover.

Then again Captain Fanchon was looked upon as a mysterious personage.

He appeared rich, called himself a trading skipper, had saved the life of Lucette, been introduced around by her father, and still seemed to live in an air of mystery.

Such were the disquieting influences that prevailed in the town, and gave to the upper strata of society a feeling of unrest.

But there was one who seemed not to care what was said, and that one was Captain Frank Fanchon.

That gentleman arose the morning after his game of cards with Shelley, fresh and smiling.

He made a careful toilet, partook heartily of his breakfast, and had ordered his gig to go ashore, when he was told that the Templeton wharf-boat was coming off, and the merchant was in it.

"Ask him right down into the cabin," said Captain Fanchon, and he threw off his coat and boots, put on slippers, a dressing-gown and smoking-cap, and lighting a cigar, lay back in a divan, a book in his hand.

"My dear Fanchon, you do take life coolly,"

said Mr. Templeton, as he descended the companionway and beheld the sailor taking his ease.

"Ah! Mr. Templeton, this is a pleasure.

"Be seated, pray, and have you breakfasted?"

"Two hours ago."

"I was thinking of going out to see you to-day."

"Would have been glad to have you do so," and Mr. Templeton seemed a bit nervous.

"Any news of your son?"

"None; nor do I wish any."

"Ah! I will not refer to him again, for it seems unpleasant to you."

"It is, sir."

"I only hope that he has done nothing to place his life in jeopardy."

"He has put his neck in a noose, for I am sure that he, and no one else, cut out the brig; but it is not of Tracey Templeton that I have come to see you."

"I am all attention, my dear Mr. Templeton."

"It is of Miss Templeton."

"Ah!"

"You once told me that you loved her?"

"I love her far more now, sir."

Mr. Templeton grew uneasy, and it was evident that he had an unpleasant task before him.

"Now, Captain Fanchon, you asked my consent to offer yourself to my daughter?"

"I did, sir, and would repeat the request."

"Suppose I told you that she was not the heiress that people think her?"

"It is Miss Templeton, sir, not her money, I seek."

"That is well said, Fanchon; but the truth is, I will leave her rich when I die."

"You are not an old man yet, sir, so we will not look to her inheritance, Mr. Templeton."

"You are very good; but in such an event she will get her brother's share also."

"It will be quite a fortune."

"Yes, for I am rich, rich in property, and yet I am poor in gold, for just now I need money to tide me over."

"Did I mortgage my property, I would lose my credit; but I have made some investments that have gone to the wall, and worse, and I need a clean hundred thousand dollars."

"A large sum, sir."

"Yes, but I have notes coming due, within three weeks that must be taken up."

"If I ask for a renewal it confesses my inability to pay, and thus shows my weakness; but with these notes out of the way, I can go on swimmingly, and I will need no further aid."

"How can I aid you, Mr. Templeton?"

"You can do so, certainly."

"Pray tell me how?"

"You are rich?"

"Yes, so considered."

"But you are?"

"Well, to prevent argument, I will say yes."

"You can lend me that money?"

"One hundred thousand?"

"Yes."

"For how long?"

"One year, payable as I can, in amounts of ten and twenty thousand."

"With what interest?"

"Ten per cent."

"And what security?"

"My note, for I will not mortgage."

"You are right, sir; you must save your credit."

"By all means, for I am considered to-day to be worth a million."

"And what are you worth?"

"I have my business, which pays in twenty-five thousand a year, a few rents, and my country seat of Seaside Temple."

"With sundry ships, warehouses, a dock, offices, and various little properties?"

"Yes."

"Worth how much?"

"Call Seaside Temple worth a hundred thousand, and my town wharf, ware-rooms and vessels twice as much more."

"And the rents?"

"Some houses that cost me fifty thousand, and rent, all told, for five thousand a year."

"All together, you are worth, in a large calculation, under three hundred thousand?"

"Yes, so call it."

"And you have one hundred thousand in notes coming in?"

"Yes."

"If put under the hammer your property would little more than cover the notes."

"Not much more."

"You are not so rich as people believe."

"Oh, I had large properties in New York, Portland and Philadelphia; but these I let go to get money for investments, and each speculation was a failure, and I lost over half a million in clean cash thus."

"This was unfortunate; but you think, with your notes taken up, you could get along all right, with your business and rents?"

"I know it."

"You would yet save thirty thousand a year?"

"Yes, all of that."

"But your living would cost you ten thousand."

"Yes."

"And you expect to pay back to me one

hundred thousand with ten thousand interest, with not one fifth of that sum?"

"Oh, I hoped to renew, and pay as I could while some speculations—"

"Hold on, Mr. Templeton, for this is business between us, and not a dollar should you invest in speculations, if I advance the money."

"But—"

"No, sir, for you fail in all your speculations, and by your own count have lost over half a million in clean gold."

"No, sir you must live on your income from business and rents, and save a balance."

"I will do so."

"Now I wish to say that I will drive this bargain with you:

"I will give you, mind you, *give* you one hundred thousand in cash, to redeem your notes, and in return I wish a paper signed by you that you forfeit your estate to me if you speculate."

"I'll do it."

"Hold on, for I am not yet through with my terms."

"I will not interrupt you, Captain Fanchon," and the old merchant's eyes glittered with delight.

"I will, in return for my hundred thousand dollars, demand your daughter's hand in marriage, within six months from date."

"Agreed, sir."

"Now, Mr. Templeton, here is the paper you are to sign, so that you are not acting in the dark, and I wish you to go and gain your daughter's consent, while I will come out this afternoon to dine with you and hear her answer."

"See, I write as follows," and reading aloud as he wrote, Captain Fanchon penned the following:

"I hereby agree to sell my daughter, Lucette Templeton, to Frank Fanchon, Captain, etc., for the sum of one hundred thousand dollars in hand paid."

"It is furthermore agreed that my daughter shall become the wife of the said Fanchon within six months from date, and that I hereby bind myself not to enter into any speculations whatever in a business way, outside of my regular mercantile service, under penalty of forfeiting my full right and title in all property belonging to me, in favor of the said Frank Fanchon."

"Given under my hand and seal, on board schooner Restless, etc."

"Here, Mr. Templeton, you see I have your bond not to speculate, and it will save you from want in your old age."

"And more, I bind you to give me your daughter, and in return you get the one hundred thousand."

"Now you can return home and arrange this little matter, and I will come out to dinner."

"To-morrow, you come on board my vessel, and you shall have the money, and can sign this paper."

"Is this satisfactory?"

"It has to be," was the answer, and the merchant took his departure.

After a short stay at the office he drove home, and as he got out of the carriage Lucette met him on the piazza, with:

"See, father, there is Captain Fanchon's schooner running out to sea under all sail, and he has not been to tell us good-by."

The merchant uttered a suppressed oath, as he saw that it was indeed the schooner of his mysterious friend, Fanchon.

CHAPTER XII.

FANCHON KEEPS HIS PROMISE.

MR. TEMPLETON had been gone but a short time from on board the schooner, when a boat, manned by fourteen oarsmen, and containing a dozen marines and several officers pulled rapidly toward the Restless.

"Ahoy the barge!" sung out Lieutenant Farwell.

"The barge of the cutter-of-war, Vicious!" came the response.

"Ay, ay, sir! Come alongside," was the cheery answer.

In a moment more Captain Loyd Chester was on deck, and he said hastily, to Fanchon, who came out of the cabin:

"Captain Fanchon, I have to claim the fulfillment of your promise sooner than I had anticipated."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, for a pilot boat has just run in and reported to me that the brig Lucette is hiding down beyond Telegraph Hill, Nantasket."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and I desire to go in your vessel at once in chase of her."

"By all means, sir, and either for yourself and crew, or with mine, the schooner is at your service."

"I will bring my men on board, sir, sixteen seamen, twelve marines, a lieutenant in command of the latter and a midshipman as my aide, while I shall claim your services and that of your crew."

"With pleasure, sir. Mr. Farwell, get the schooner under way, and put duck enough on her to make her dance seaward."

In a few moments the schooner's anchor was up, her sails set, and heeling over gradually to the ten-knot breeze she went dashing down the harbor.

"Now, sir, you are in command, and consider me as your first luff," said Frank Fanchon pleasantly.

"I thank you, Captain Fanchon," was the response, and in the generous heart of the young sailor all suspicion against the mysterious skipper was allayed.

Past the handsome villa of merchant Templeton the schooner went along at a pace that won the admiration of Loyd Chester and his men, and of those who saw her from the shore.

She was a beautiful craft, as trim as any cruiser afloat, with graceful lines from cut-water to rudder-post, and carrying lofty sticks that held their vast display of canvas well.

She had a long eighteen-pounder mounted fore and aft, and they worked on a pivot, the one on the bow being rather out of place, Loyd Chester thought, for a vessel that used her weapons only as a defense.

Then there were three brass howitzers to a broadside, two of them twelve-pounders, and the other four sixes, and they shone with the brightness of burnished gold.

There were cutlasses, boarding-pikes and muskets in racks about the masts, and the vessel certainly had the appearance of being a well-disciplined cruiser, rather than a merchant craft.

Her crew were two-score in number, wore a uniform, and seemed to be thoroughly well-disciplined.

"Your schooner is very fast, Captain Fanchon," said Loyd Chester, as they rounded the point of Long Island with a rush, and headed for the lower end of Paddock's Island, in the vicinity of which the stolen brig had been seen.

"Yes, she runs well, and we will have a chance, I hope, to see what the brig can do with her."

"I hope so, and I believe you can catch her, which is more than I could say for the Vicious, all things being equal."

"There she is, sir," coolly said Captain Fanchon, as the kidnapped craft was seen to shoot around the point of Paddock's Island, square away on a course that would take her straight out to sea, and begin to set all the sail she could carry.

In an instant all was animation on board the schooner, for all recognized the beautiful brig, and the schooner's course was changed from southeast to almost due east, and she was crowded with sail, standing up well under it, in spite of the twelve-knot breeze that was now blowing.

Instantly it became a chase, and every eye narrowly watched the result.

Lieutenant Farwell was closely examining the brig through his glass, and said:

"She has some thirty men on board; but I will go aloft and take a better view."

He was gone some ten minutes, and returning to the deck, said:

"I counted just thirty-three men, all told, Captain Chester."

"And what think you of the brig's speed?"

"I think, sir, she is holding her own," he answered, and then he turned and gave Fanchon a look.

A moment after Frank Fanchon walked over to the windward bulwark and joined his officer, saying simply:

"Well, Farwell?"

"We are steadily gaining."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sure?"

"I took bearings aloft, and I am confident, and we will run into good range before an hour."

"Ah!"

For a moment Captain Fanchon stood in silence, and then he said in the same low tone in which he had before spoken:

"Farwell?"

"Yes, sir."

"I do not care to see that brig taken for various reasons."

"Yes, sir."

"You understand?"

"I do, sir," and Farwell walked forward.

He was gone but a short while when he returned, and asked:

"Captain Fanchon, can I get your large French glass?"

"Yes, it is below," and Farwell descended to the cabin.

He was gone for quite a while, but returned with the glass, and adjusting it to his eyes turned it upon the brig.

"We are losing, sir," he called out to Captain Chester.

"No, for it seemed awhile ago that we were gaining."

"So it seemed to me, sir; but she is certainly dropping us now."

"By Jove! but you are right," said Captain Chester, after a hasty glance through the glass.

"Yes, Farwell, we are losing ground—the brig sails well," returned Captain Fanchon.

"She does, indeed, and she can yet spread a little more canvas; but how will your long eighteen reach her, Captain Fanchon?"

"We might try, sir."

"Mr. Farwell, clear the fore-castle gun for action, and you had better aim it yourself, unless

Captain Chester would like to have one of his men do so."

"Oh, no, sir," was the reply, and soon after the deep roar of the gun was heard, and almost immediately after the shot was seen to fall astern, and in a direct line.

"A little larger charge of powder, Farwell," called out Fanchon.

"She is spreading more sail, sir," said the midgy, who had accompanied Loyd Chester on board.

This was true, for those on the brig had seemed to awaken to the knowledge that they were too near to their pursuers, and there was extra canvas set, which added materially to her speed.

A second shot from the long eighteen struck astern, but with a ricochet went over the brig, burying itself in the sea a cable's length ahead.

"Well aimed, Farwell, but try again," called out Captain Fanchon.

Again the gun was fired, but the ball barely reached the brig.

"She is dropping us well, sir," said Fanchon.

"She is, indeed; but do you observe who it is that appears to be her commander?"

"I am not sufficiently acquainted, sir, with the bearing of Captain Tracey Templeton, if that is what you mean, to say whether it is he or not."

"I will take your glass then, for it seems to be an improved one."

"It is, sir, and was presented by a French captain whose vessel I saved from a pirate off Cuba."

"It is the best glass I ever saw," said Loyd Chester, as he leveled it upon the brig and eyed her closely.

"I fear that it is Tracey Templeton—poor fellow!—on yonder brig," he said, sadly.

"Do you make him out?"

"There is a tall form standing near the helmsman, who is evidently the commander; but I do not see his face, though his bearing is that of young Templeton."

"If taken, sir, what could be done with him?"

"He could be hanged."

"But the brig was his vessel, as I understand it."

"Oh, no, only a part of her; and this he relinquished by letter to his sister, giving up his command of the brig, so that his seizure of her afterward was an act of piracy; and his father, from some unaccountable reason, would push it against him as such."

"Then he would hang?"

"Unless his father withdrew the charge."

"I could almost wish that he might not be taken."

"And so would I, unless he means willfully to turn pirate, and in that case I have no mercy for him; but it seems that we are not to capture him, if he it be, as the brig is surely dropping us and your shots fall short."

"True, sir."

The brig had now gotten free of the islands into deep water, while the schooner, nearly three miles astern, was off the Narrows light-house.

But the schooner held on, with all sails set that would draw, and the brig gained steadily upon her.

"It does not seem, Captain Fanchon, as though the schooner sailed as well as she did," said Loyd Chester, gazing over the side.

"I thought so myself, sir; but it is because the brig is sailing faster, I guess; but will you hold on?"

"Assuredly, for an accident may yet give us the chase," was the stern reply of the young commander.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STORMY INTERVIEW.

How truthfully it is said that when one begins a downward course, how easy it is to follow it up with other sins, which the first act of wrong has caused the conscience to be less sensitive of suffering under.

So it was with merchant Templeton.

He had stood well with all who knew him, as a business man, and though stern in his demeanor toward every one, he was respected.

It is true he had seemingly done no wrong, other than to risk his fortune in speculation, and so he tried to consider it; but then that which he had risked was not his own.

It was property left by the mother of Tracey and Lucette to them alone, only it was in their father's care.

In all their lifetime thus far he had not told them what had been their inheritance, for he did not deem it necessary until one or the other married, the time when Mrs. Templeton's bequest was to be given them.

Never doubting their father, in ignorance of their rights, they had asked no questions, and little dreamed that he had defrauded them.

It is true he made the first investment with the hope of adding to their fortune and his own, jointly; but this turning out illy, he had invested other money from the same source, to redeem the losses.

This, too, was a bad venture, and so it went on until the inheritance from their mother had been squandered.

To redeem himself, the merchant had, with his name tarnished by his act, gone still deeper into the mire, and tried to force his son into a marriage that was distasteful to him, for he felt that by so doing he would get the handling of his wife's money, and thus be able to redeem his losses by another trial.

The result of this effort the reader has witnessed, in his driving his son from his home, with a bitter curse following upon his heels.

With nothing to expect from Tracey Templeton, and his notes verging on maturity, the merchant grew almost desperate, and he turned to his daughter to save him.

He knew positively nothing of Frank Fanchon, and frequently, in his hearing, had heard him spoken of as an adventurer, while Loyd Chester had frankly told him that he believed him to be crooked.

But Leonard Templeton must save himself.

He must not lose caste, must not go down with a crash, and some one else must suffer.

He was not a man that had strong loves, though his hates were.

He had loved his wife in his stern way, but then he had broken her heart.

He was proud of his handsome son, but unbending toward him.

He had an affection for Lucette, yet it was not the deep regard he felt for himself.

So some one must suffer, and who better than his daughter?

He thought of Loyd Chester for her, but then the young officer, he ascertained, had only about sixty thousand dollars laid away.

He turned to Marvel Shelley next, and then came to the idea that, with Judge Shelley's home sacked, the debts of the heir paid, and all other things taken into consideration, the young aristocrat could not have a large balance in bank.

So he would not do.

There were several men of his set who were very rich, he knew, and he was aware that they would jump at the chance to marry Lucette.

They were nearly as old as he was, and he considered them favorably for awhile, but then happened to think that they were cunning business men, and that he would not have the handling of any of their money, and on the contrary, they would expect a dowry with Lucette.

So they were dismissed.

Lucius Sheldon, who he knew was devotedly attached to his daughter, was not to be thought of, for he was a poor man.

So he turned to Frank Fanchon, the commander of the Restless.

"He has money," he argued, "and he saved her life, so that is in his favor with her."

"He loves her, I know, and I think he is a man to pay well, for he told me when he asked for her hand that he was willing to invest money with me, and cared not for any fortune that might go with her hand."

"I hinted that her dowry was locked up in my business, and he said it mattered not—and he is my man."

This was his cunning argument, and the reader has seen how he sought the captain and what followed.

When, therefore, he drove home and found Lucette gazing at the Restless, as she was flying seaward, he was nearly wild with rage.

But ere he had a chance to reach white heat, a horseman dashed up bearing a letter.

Hastily he broke the seal and read aloud:

"SCHOONER RESTLESS."

"MY DEAR MR. TEMPLETON:—"

"Captain Chester is on board with me, and requests that I run out, his vessel being under repair, and endeavor to overhaul your stolen brig, which an incoming pilot-boat reports in the harbor, lying near Nantasket."

"Of course I cannot refuse, and we are now getting under way, and hence I will have to beg you to pardon my not coming to dinner, and present my regrets to Miss Templeton."

"Hoping that the engagement to dine will be kept upon my return to port, and with kind remembrances to Miss Templeton,"

"Yours,"

"FANCHON."

"A nice letter, Lucette," said the merchant, greatly relieved.

"Yes, father, Captain Fanchon is a very pleasant gentleman; but why were you so angry, sir, at his vessel going to sea?"

"Because I am very punctilious, my child, and he had made an engagement with me to dine, and to see him running out to sea was very provoking, indeed."

"I would feel just as happy if he did not come," was the reply.

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Nothing, father, other than that I dread Captain Fanchon more than I like him."

"Nonsense! but what can be the cause of the brig being in the harbor, when Chester followed her out to sea the night of her escape?"

"I cannot tell, sir."

"That boy is hanging about the harbor for no good."

"What boy, sir?"

"Your brother, if you will call him so, but not my son."

"You still believe that brother Tracey is on the brig?"

"I know it."

"What have you heard, father?" anxiously asked Lucette.

"Enough to make me convinced that he stole the brig, and intends turning pirate."

"Father! oh, father!"

"You need not bewail it, for it is true."

"If I believed it, I would indeed bewail that my brother had fallen so low," she said, with scorn.

"Well he has, and more, I fear he is hanging about the harbor to rob my house."

"Father! you are as cruel as Death to talk so of brother Tracey, and until I know that he has done wrong, I will not listen to it, even from you," and with flashing eyes she walked into the mansion, while her father muttered:

"I must try a different tack with her, that is certain, for she has a pluck I never suspected her of having."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MERCHANT'S STORY.

FEELING that he could not gain favor with his daughter by abuse of her brother, Mr. Templeton was determined to take another plan, so he went also into the house, and found her pacing the library, her beautiful face strangely stern.

"My child, I have had far more to worry me than you know, and hence I feel bitterly toward your brother."

"But this abuse of him does no good, and see I will out with it, and we will drop him out of our hearts."

"Come, let us go up on the tower, and we can have a fine view of the harbor, and perhaps see the brig, while I will tell you just why it is I feel as I do toward poor, misguided Tracey," and the merchant fairly choked with emotion, but it was on account of having to lie as he intended, to cover up his own wrong-doing.

Never in her life did Lucette remember to have heard her father speak so kindly, and with a cry she sprung toward him, pillowing her head upon his breast.

The man was touched, and he dropped his arm about her.

He recalled how often had her mother appealed to him for a kind word, and how his coldness had repulsed her.

"Come, my child, dry your tears, and let us go up to the tower."

"No one will hear us there, the air will refresh us both, and we will see whether the schooner catches the brig," and he led the way up the broad stairway toward the tower at the south end of the mansion, and which ran up to a considerable height above the top-floor of the main building.

"Lordy! what's up when old massa got he arm 'round Missy Lu?"

"I guess he feel sorry Marse Tracy done gone, and gwine ter make up by lubbin' de one he got left, but it hain't like him ter show 'fection, an' my heart bleeds fer poor ole mis' in her grave, fer he dun break her heart sure," said old Aunt Rachel, as she saw the father and daughter going up the stairs.

It was a pleasant place on the top of the tower, for there were comfortable seats there, a fancy, pagoda-like roof, a hammock and a table, for it was used as a retreat by Lucette, and often had her mother taken her children there in the long ago and passed hours at a time.

"Be seated, Lu, and I will search for the brig, and see if I can find her, for there goes the schooner abreast of Spectacle Islands," and still the merchant spoke with the unwonted kindness of manner in which he had before addressed her.

She sunk into a chair, shading her eyes with her hands, but not so much to keep out the sunlight, as to hide the welling tears that would flow, when she felt that her father's stern bearing was broken toward her.

"Oh, if while in this mood he would only forgive Tracey, for whatever my poor brother has done," she murmured.

With his glass the merchant swept the island-dotted harbor far and near, but could not see the brig, so he took a seat by his daughter and said:

"Lu, what I have to tell you will pain you, as it has me; but it is better to tell you, and then end the matter."

"Is it so terrible, father?"

"It is a wrong that Tracey should never have done, and, with my violent temper, and love of right, I naturally was very much incensed when he refused to allow me to save him in the manner I hoped to have done."

"You are aware, I believe, that there were certain moneys of your mother's which I had control of for investment?"

"No, father, I know nothing of your business affairs, but I do now recall that mother used to say that she was happy in being able to give to both Tracey and myself a good fortune."

"Ahem! yes, that is just it, the estate being in my keeping."

"Well, I kept it apart from my business affairs, and this Tracey knew, and the result is that he got possession of it."

"Oh, father!"

"True, and he squandered it."

"Why, father, Tracey was a little wild, as

young men go, I admit, but how could he do what you say, for that would be dishonest?"

"Just what it was, my child."

"But how could he use what you had charge of?"

"The property lay in other places; not here, Lucette, and consisted of valuable lands, which each year were increasing in value."

"He knew they were lying idle, and were in much demand, being in the rapidly growing part of cities that were causing wonderful increase in the real estate prices."

"They were on record in the name of your mother, I being agent or executor, and, driven to desperation by his gambling debts and—"

"Gambling! did Brother Tracey ever gamble, father?"

"It was his ruling vice, my child, and more, he kept from you a secret, and I am convinced that he was squandering money upon some one whom he was ashamed to tell us of."

"Oh, father!"

"So he ran down to New York, got the particulars about this property, and paid his debts with the money he got for the sale of the lands, for he signed my name to the deeds."

"My poor, poor brother!"

"Can there be no mistake, father?"

"The property is all sold, Lucette, and your brother not only did this, but forged my name to the deeds."

Lucette seemed stunned at what she heard, and the merchant continued:

"The sum he obtained, to show you the enormity of his crime, was for a larger amount than I am worth to-day."

"Poor Tracey!"

"He gambled it away, and, when I went to dispose of the property, to invest in my business, and give him his interest with me of one-third, you having the remaining third, I found that a fortune had been stolen."

"This is terrible."

"It was a fearful blow to me, my child; but I waited until he came to port, told him I knew all, and forgave him, if he would do one thing."

"And that was—"

"To marry Ellen Vancouver."

"Father, she would never make Tracey a good wife."

"Could she be worse than her husband?" was the stern response.

"Ah, no!"

"Well, he refused, although he knew his misdeeds had so cramped me that I was on the eve of failure."

"Poor father, how I pity you."

"I am to be pitied, Lucette, for I can see no way how I can recover, other than one, which we will talk of later."

"But Tracey, having wrecked my fortune, his own, and yours, refused to marry Miss Vancouver, whose father was anxious to have me invest her dowry for her, and this would have tided me over and all would have been well."

"I think brother should have made the sacrifice, father, after what he had done."

"Yes, after wrecking us all, as it were, stealing the money, and committing forgery to do so, he was forgiven by me, yet refused, and then I drove him from me, as you know."

"Now he has stolen the brig, for I am sure of this, Lucette, and will turn pirate, unless he is captured by the schooner."

"If he is taken, father?"

"He will be hanged."

"Oh, no, for he had been her commander and part owner, and—"

"Lucette, you have a good business head, but let me tell you there were no papers to show his ownership of part of the brig, and he gave up his nominal share to you, so it rests with me to have him hanged as a pirate."

"But you would not, father?" anxiously asked the maiden.

"After all that he has done, it would be best to let him die now, before he has committed murder and robbery upon the high seas."

"If the schooner takes the brig, she is a prize to them, and I lose her value, or we'll have to buy her back."

"But Captain Chester will not claim her as a prize."

"His men will—or rather Fanchon's."

"Would Captain Fanchon, or Captain Chester, press the charge of piracy, father?"

"If the brig surrenders, they could not, for she belongs to me, and if I did not press the charge, as her owner, your brother would go free after his piratical act."

"And you would not press the charge, father?"

"I would, so help me God!" was the stern response of the unforgiving old man.

CHAPTER XV.

LUCETTE'S RESPONSE.

FOR some time after the bitter words of Mr. Templeton, not a word was said by either father or daughter.

Both seemed busy with their own thoughts.

But, to carry out the part he had set himself to play, Mr. Templeton changed his stern manner once more and said:

"Lucette, now you know why it is that I am embittered toward my son."

"He has gone, so let him go his way, and we will forget him, though never can I forgive him."

"If he is taken, he must suffer the penalty of his wrong-doing."

"But, father, is there no hope that Tracey may change his ways?"

"Had he such intention, would he have written you the letter he did?"

"No; he had carved out his career for himself, and it is his plan to abide by it."

"As for me, I am left on the verge of ruin."

"Can you not think of some way, father, to extricate yourself? for I do not wish to see you, in your old age, come to want, though I do not care for myself."

"I am young, and can bear a life of deprivation, while you cannot."

"I admit this life of luxury is very enjoyable, but if it comes to the worst, why, I can earn a living for us both."

"Ah, child, you are ever so good; but the humiliation would break my heart."

"Can we not devise some way out of it, father?"

"Tell me all about your affairs, and see if my old head on young shoulders, cannot see a way out of your financial misfortunes, my dear father."

For some time the merchant remained silent.

Then he said:

"There is one way out of it, Lucette."

"Tell me it."

"For you to marry."

She started, her face flushed, and then he said:

"Why I am but a child, father."

"You will be eighteen in a short while?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are far older in appearance, in actions, in common sense and education, than any girl I know of your age."

"I feel older, father; but yet the years count me but a child."

"Still, if you married I could save all."

"But I don't love any one."

"Love is a commodity that few married people find it necessary to possess."

"But there are marriages for love only."

"Maybe; but you could learn to love!"

"Who would I have to marry, father?"

"Well, I had thought of Captain Fanchon."

She again started and turned slightly pale.

"Father, I fear I could never love him."

"He saved your life."

"Yes, and I am grateful in my inmost heart for it."

"He is a very handsome man."

"Exceedingly so, father, as handsome men go; but there is that about him I cannot understand, and not doing so, I fear him."

"He certainly is a very fascinating man."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"But what, child?"

"You do not know anything about him."

"Oh yes, for I have had means of finding him out, and he is a clever fellow."

"That he is well born his refinement of manner shows, and he is very rich, while he loves you most tenderly."

"He is very good to me."

"Yes, and wishes to offer you his heart and hand, while, when I told him frankly that I could give you no fortune, in spite of what the world thought, he said he not only did not wish any, but would give me what money I needed to pull through my financial difficulties; and when I tell you it will take a hundred thousand dollars to clear me, you can understand how highly he values your love, Lucette."

"It is a large sum, sir; but is he so rich?"

"Oh yes, he is a very rich man, though he follows the sea."

"It would be almost like selling me, father."

"Nonsense, child, don't talk so, or I will drop the whole matter and go to the wall."

"Forgive me, father, but it did look so like a bargain; but then I do not love Captain Fanchon, and were I to become his wife, I do not believe I would ever know him better than I do to-day."

"He seems to wear a mask that hides his heart, thoughts and all feeling."

"Yet he threw aside that mask from off his heart when he sprang into the sea, at the risk of his life, to save you from death."

"True, sir."

"And when he sung that ballad here, the other evening, I saw tears in your eyes."

"Yes, he has a most plaintive voice, full of richness and expression."

"He has lived much on his vessel, and he is reserved among men; but he is a noble man I assure you."

"Yet Captain Chester seems to doubt him, and said some very ugly things, father."

"Chester is jealous."

"Why should he be?"

"You ought to see that he loves you, as do many others; but you seem to care for none of them."

"Nor do I; and yet, I would prefer to marry Loyd Chester to Captain Fanchon, and I believe I would rather be the wife of Lucius Sheldon than of either."

"Then you certainly do not know your own heart, and can marry Fanchon just as well, for

he is worth more than Chester, Shelley and Sheldon put together."

"In riches."

"In worth; and the unkind things that Chester said about Fanchon he must have changed his opinion of, for he has asked him to go to sea after the brig."

"That is true, father."

"Well, my child, it rests with you whether I sink or swim, and you can decide yes or no, but let me know now."

"Father, I will see Captain Chester and ask him to explain his reasons for suspicion against Captain Fanchon—"

"But—"

"I will," continued Lucette, quietly, "see just what Captain Fanchon has to say, when he offers himself—as you say he will—and then you shall have my response."

"Don't fail me, Lucette," said the old man in a tone that was pleading, and there flashed through the maiden's mind that there was some selfishness in her father's nature.

But she would give no other response than to wait until she had seen Captain Fanchon, heard his offer, and knew what was the opinion of Loyd Chester regarding him.

To change the subject then she turned her glass upon the schooner, and just as she did so, the deep boom of a gun reached their ears.

"Oh, father! there is the brig, and she is flying seaward, with the schooner in full chase and firing upon her."

But Mr. Templeton was already upon his feet and had his glass leveled.

"Yes, and the brig, fast as she is, has a swift-or craft in her wake in that schooner, and she will be taken."

"God grant not," murmured Lucette, and until the two vessels, the pursuer and pursued, faded from view in the gathering gloom of night the father and daughter watched them, while it was evident that Mr. Templeton had somewhat changed his mind, as even at that distance their glasses showed that the brig was outfooting the schooner, and Lucette's hopes ran high that she would not be taken, for now she began to believe that her erring brother was really on board of her and ready for any crime.

CHAPTER XVI.

A YOUNG GIRL'S PLUCK.

WHEN Mr. Templeton and Lucette came out of the supper-room, where they had passed nearly an hour, they were fairly startled by a blinding flash and the deep crash of thunder that greeted them as they stepped out upon the piazza.

The skies had appeared cloudless to them when they left the tower, and they were seaward; but landward a storm was sweeping up which they had failed to notice.

Retreating to the library they sat there, listening to the terrific peals of thunder, and shielding their eyes from the vivid glare of lightning.

"A fearful night at sea," said the merchant, speaking as though thinking aloud.

"My poor brother!" moaned Lucette, showing with whom her thoughts were.

"The brig and the schooner will have a hard time of it in this blow," said Mr. Templeton.

"I hope they will both ride it out in safety," was the answer, more in the manner of a prayer.

"Who can tell? But if I thought Heaven would hear my prayer, it would be that the brig would go down with all on board, and thus end a career that would be far worse did he live."

"Father, I could almost say amen to that, and feel happy in the thought that Tracey did die ere he branded himself with the infamy of a pirate's name. I could feel content," said Lucette, earnestly.

"And so could I; but what a fearful blow this is! Why, the house fairly shakes, and the howling of the winds is fearful."

They seemed almost awed by the storm, and, rising, Mr. Templeton rung for a servant and bade him tell the boatman to go down and see if the boats were safe.

"He has gone, sir," said the butler.

"Send him to me when he returns."

"Yes, sir," and soon after the butler accompanied the boatman to the library door.

"Well, Bent, we are having a fearful night out!"

"Yes, Mr. Templeton, it is as black as I ever saw, and the sea rolls in here from Broad Channel in tremendous waves."

"The boats are all safe?"

"Yes, sir, I drew the small ones far up on the shore and double-anchored the yacht and cat-rig."

"You saw no sail out on the waters?"

"It is too black to see anything, sir, and the lights at the fort are not visible; oh, sir, but it's a nasty night on the water."

"The beacon on the tower cupola is burning all right, I hope, for its light may serve to save some poor vessel from destruction," said Lucette.

"No, miss, the wind blew it out some time ago."

"Then it should be lighted at once."

"No one would dare go up there in this wind, miss, for they would be blown off," replied the man.

"I will pay you well, Bent, if you will go."

"No, miss, gold would not buy me to go on that tower now, or I'd go as poor old Skipper Dick did."

"Some one should go."

"Nonsense, Lucette, no one could remain there an instant," said the merchant.

Lucette made no reply, but soon after slipped out of the library.

She took from a closet her boat cloak and hat, and securing a lantern ascended to the roof of the tower.

The stout stone structure vibrated under the force of the wind, but, undismayed she crouched down behind the balustrade and looked above her.

She knew that the trap in the ceiling of the cupola raised up, and that the servant who lighted the lamp ascended by a step-ladder, which hung on hooks on one side of the balustrade.

Creeping there she raised the end of the ladder suddenly, and, by good fortune its end went right into the trap, or hatch.

With her back to the wind she then attempted to ascend; but the cloak and her skirts blew about the ladder and held her fast, and it was with difficulty that she descended again under shelter of the wall.

Throwing off the cloak and hat she bound the scarf tight about her hair, and taking the hammock rope ends, which the reader will remember was there, she bound her skirts as close as she could about her limbs and not impede her movements.

Then she once more seized the lantern and started up the ladder.

She could move only with the greatest difficulty, but step by step she went upward.

When half way she felt that the wind was bending the stout ladder; but undaunted up she went until her head touched the hatch.

Raising it, she crept within and closed it beneath her.

Then she took the glass off of the lantern and saw that one small hole in the glass, broken in some way, had put out the beacon.

Into this she stuffed her kerchief and then lighted the beacon.

It flickered a little at first, but she saw that she had remedied the cause of its going out, and she started upon her return.

It was desperately dangerous, and the stout pagoda-like cupola swayed with her; but she descended in safety, and, not daring to attempt to remove the ladder, retraced her way downstairs.

Entering the library her father started to his feet at sight of her while just then in dashed Bent crying out:

"Oh Lord, Mr. Templeton the beacon is lighted, and only Skipper Dick's ghost could have done it."

"Silence, you fool!" was the stern rebuke, and turning to his daughter Mr. Templeton said anxiously:

"Why, Lucette, you are as white as a sheet. What has happened?"

"Father, I just lighted the beacon, and I guess I'm a little nervous now it is over; but I could not bear to have it out on such a night as this."

Bent had quickly skipped out when he heard who it was that had lighted the beacon—a feat he dared not attempt, and stepping to the sideboard in the dining-room, which adjoined the library, Mr. Templeton said:

"Here, Lucette, take this glass of wine, for you need it. You are a brave girl; but a terrible risk you ran."

"Thank you, father, but now I will be all right, though I did think several times I would be blown off and killed; but ah! how glad I am that the beacon is lighted."

For half an hour longer the storm raged, and then Lucette said she would retire, as it was blowing itself out, and she went to her room, where Rachel scolded her for the risk she had run, and said:

"Missy Lu, there hain't no men-folk; even round this place hab got the courage to do what you, a young lady hab done, and God bless you, chile, you git your reward fer riskin' your sweet life ter sabe mankind, see ef yer don't, honey."

Just then the brass knocker on the door rung out with startling distinctness, and Mr. Templeton followed the butler to the door.

"A gentleman, sir, and he's nearer dead than alive. He came up out of the water staggerin', sir, and scared me awful bad; but he said the vessel he was on was swamped, and all went down 'cepting him, and he saw the beacon light and swam ashore."

"Thank God!" came in fervent tones from the lips of Lucette, as she stood half undressed in the up-stairs hall by her door and heard what Bent had said.

"Didn't I done tole yer so, honey?" cried the delighted Rachel.

"Quick, Rachel, see that a spare room is ready," cried Lucette, while Mr. Templeton had gone out upon the piazza, to where the stranger

had sunk down upon the stone steps, utterly exhausted.

A moment after he entered, and following him came the butler and Bent, supporting the wrecked mariner, and he was taken at once to a spare room in one wing of the mansion.

"Well, Aunt Rachel!" cried Lucette, as she sat in her room awaiting the return of the old negress.

"Oh, missy, he am a navy officer, a lieutenant, I guesses; for he hab a uniform on, and he's hain't some as a pictur'."

"He done tole massa his name, but I didn't hear it, and he say as how he was goin' home on a leave of absence, and took a packet skunner from New York to Portland, and got run in here by a pirit, and then ther storm come up sudden, ther skunner capsize, and all went down, fer she sunk so quick."

"He said all were black about him, and he gave up fer lost, when all suddint like, a bright eye shone over ther waters and he swam toward it."

"And he kept on swimmin' and swimmin', missy, until he got ashore, and fell down on the ground at Bent's feet, for he was so exhausted."

"But he's better now, and says he only needs rest; so now, missy, you kin go ter sleep this bressed night, knowin' you has sated a sinner from de debbil."

"Oh, Aunt Rachel, is he a bad man?"

"No, missy, he hain't; but I was speakin' figertive like, yer knows."

"Ah, yes, and I will go to sleep, Aunt Rachel, with a heart that is lightened by the knowledge that I have saved a life: but oh! how fearful that the others should drown."

"I wonder if no others escaped?"

"No, missy, he do say that he never swam in a worse sea, and he called and called to others, but got no answer, and all went down."

"Were there many on board?"

"Seven with himself, missy."

"Ah, me. I fear the morrow will show many more lives lost," and Lucette retired to her bed, her heart aching for those who were forced to be on such a night at sea.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RETURN OF THE RESTLESS.

It was late before Lucette dropped off to sleep, so busy were her thoughts with all that had happened, and so bitter were the recollections of what she had heard about her dearly loved brother, whom she had ever looked upon as her hero, the soul of honor and nobility of nature.

If he was indeed on the brig, and intending to lead a life of sin, she really hoped that he might meet his death in the storm, and thus end his career ere he had stained his hands with the blood of his fellow-beings.

Worn out at last, she sunk to sleep, and old Rachel would not awaken her when she went in the next morning and saw her sleeping.

So it was late when she awoke, and calling Rachel, she said:

"Why, it is nearly ten o'clock."

"Yes, missy."

"And my father?"

"He slept late, too, missy, and hab gone to town half an hour ago."

"Oh, Rachel, tell me!"

"Yes, missy."

"Did the storm do much damage?" and Lucette drew aside the heavy curtains.

"It done heaps, missy, I has heard."

The sun was shining brightly, and the wind yet blew fresh, while the waves were running high out on the harbor.

Here and there a tree had been blown down, the top of the boat-house had been carried away, boughs and heavy limbs from different trees filled the lawn, a boat was crushed in on the shore, and further down the beach a sloop had been driven upon the land, and a crowd stood about her.

"Aunt Rachel, I forgot to ask about the young man?"

"He's feeling bright in the head, missy, but he hain't up, for he got some hard knocks, and is pretty stiff, he says, so master told him just to lie abed for a few days, and he'd come round all right."

"Yes, he had better do so, for indeed he must have had a fearful time of it; but has he had his breakfast?"

"Oh, yes, missy, and massa sent him one ob his dressin'-gowns, and he comfortable, only he feels like I does when I has the rheumatiz."

"It is a wonder he is alive, Aunt Rachel; but I will be down to breakfast soon, so have it ready for me, please."

Rachel gave the order to the stately butler, and Lucette was tempted to eat a hearty meal.

Then she put on her sun-hat, and went for a stroll about the place.

There were workmen on the lawn, and elsewhere about the grounds, cleaning up the debris of the storm and putting things to rights.

Bent was ruefully looking at the fancy roof of the boat-house, which had been carried some distance off, and also examining one of his shattered boats.

"The worst storm we've had, miss, for long years," he said.

"So it seems, Bent, but were any lives lost in yonder sloop ashore?"

"No, miss, they got out all right."

"Where did the schooner sink?"

"Just off the mouth of the haven, miss, and the officer swam right in through the channel without knowing it and landed yonder where your row-boat, the Lullaby, is drawn up."

"The schooner was how far off-shore?"

"As she did not strike, miss, she must have been over half a mile; a fearful swim in such a storm."

"Fearful indeed, Bent; he must be a superb swimmer."

"He certainly is, miss, and weak as he was when he came ashore, he did not seem to want to have me help him, while he wasn't a bit cast down in spirits, and hailed me with:

"'Ahoy, shipmate, I'm stranded, but I'm better off than those who were with me.'"

"Then he asked me, miss, what light that was and who lived here, and if I thought that your father would give him a berth for the night."

"Well, I am glad the beacon saved one life, Bent."

"So is I, miss, but I am more glad you did not lose your life in going up there, for you did what I would not do, and it makes me ashamed to think so."

After a few more words about the shipwrecked stranger, Lucette took a walk into the garden and selected a bouquet of fine flowers that had not been destroyed by the storm, and sent them into the invalid's room.

"With the compliments of Miss Templeton, sir, and she hopes you are better, and will not hesitate to ask for anything you wish," said Dorcas, the butler, entering the room of the mariner.

"Oh how beautiful! Why I thought every flower had been blown back to Eden," exclaimed the stranger, and he added:

"Present my compliments to Miss Templeton and tell her I appreciate her kindness as much as I do the exquisite flowers."

Dorcas delivered his message, and just then Rachel came in to report that Bent said the schooner Restless was coming up the harbor.

Quickly Lucette ran out upon the piazza, and, sure enough, there was the Restless driving along like a race-horse, a great roll of foam about her bow, and her sails reefed, while her topmasts were housed.

She had the appearance of a vessel that had had a rough time of it; but there she was, certainly safe, and it spoke well for the skill of her commander, that she had so well ridden out such a gale.

As she neared the villa, in driving by, she dipped her flag in salute, and hastily going to the mound, in the center of the carriage-drive, where stood the flagstaff, with the colors flying, Lucette returned the compliment with the skill of a middy in such work.

Instantly a gun saluted her, and the schooner flew on toward her anchorage near the town.

Then Lucette glanced down the harbor.

Here and there were other sail in sight, but nowhere was visible the brig.

"Ah! what would I not give to know what was the fate of the brig," she cried.

"They did not capture her, or she would be following, and she is nowhere in sight."

"What does it mean?"

"Well, I suppose Captain Fanchon will be out to dine with us, and then—ah, me! I hate to think of it."

"It was kind of him to salute me as he did, with the flag, and a gun."

"What a strange man he is, so courteous, so kind, so fascinating in his way, and yet to me his face is so cruel, and he keeps it masked, for I can never read what he feels or thinks."

"I wish I could like him more, and he deserves my warmest friendship, for I owe to him my life."

"I will see if I can drive away the blues by singing," and going into the house she sought the music-room, and, all unmindful of the guest near, began to run her hands over the strings of her harp.

Then in sweetest melody her voice rose and fell as she sung some ballad that was her favorite.

Her touch was masterly, and her voice rich, melodious and cultivated, and she sung with her whole soul in her music, utterly oblivious of the shipwrecked mariner within a few yards of her.

Then Dorcas appeared, and said:

"The gentleman's compliments, miss, and says will you sing that first ballad over again for him?"

Lucette started, and said aloud:

"Why, I had forgotten that there was any one in the house, Dorcas, and I fear I have disturbed him," and the stranger heard her words and knew that she meant them.

Then she added:

"Say to the gentleman that I will sing to him with pleasure, when he is able to join my father and myself in the parlor, which I hope will be soon," and Lucette hastily left the parlor, and went to her room, annoyed that she had been so thoughtless as to sing, when the gentleman might think she had done so for his benefit.

Some time after, she heard wheels upon the gravel drive, and supposing that it was her father, she went down-stairs.

But instead she came face to face with Captain Chester, who had driven out to see her, and greeted her pleasantly with:

"Ah, Miss Lucette, I have come to see you as you discover."

"And I am glad to see you, Captain Chester," she answered, and she led the way into the library, wondering upon what particular errand he had come immediately after his return to port from the chase of the brig.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN AVOWAL OF LOVE.

UPON entering the library with Captain Chester, Lucette noticed that his manner was a trifle nervous, or excited; that he did not speak in his usual quiet way, and the thought came over her that he had that to tell which would pain her.

"I was much obliged, Captain Chester, and felt honored by the salute you gave me in parting," she said.

"You refer to the dipping of the flag and the firing, Miss Lucette?"

"Yes, sir."

"I cannot lay claim to that, for it was Captain Fanchon's suggestion, though I gladly acquiesced in it."

"I thank you though; but what a night of it you must have had upon the sea."

"Indeed it was fearful, and so sudden."

"I never saw the waves run higher, or felt a fiercer wind, and but for the able management of the schooner by Captain Fanchon, I fear we would have foundered, for, as he knew his vessel, I asked him to take charge of her."

"The storm burst upon us like a cyclone, and it looked as though we must go down."

"Our foretopmast was carried away, and we were so unfortunate as to lose four men, three of mine and one of the schooner's crew, while a number of them were battered up by severe handling."

"You had some of your crew on board then?"

"Yes, about thirty from the *Vicious*, and the schooner had forty, and better seamen than Fanchon's crew I never saw."

"They obeyed his look as well as his command, and are a most fearless set of fellows, I assure you, while he rules them with a rod of iron, and commands a vessel with the skill of an admiral."

"You speak highly of Captain Fanchon's ability."

"He deserves it."

"But you did not tell me if you captured the brig."

"No, indeed, for she walked away from us nicely, and I cannot understand it, for the schooner is a very fleet craft."

"Just before the storm struck, the brig got caught in a calm, while we held the wind and moved rapidly down upon her."

"She kept up full sail, though we took in all light sails and reefed as we went along."

"We were therefore prepared, in a measure, while the brig, anxious to escape, was not, and when near her the tempest swept over the sea, striking her first."

"We heard the crashing of timbers, and when the mist, driven before the storm swept by, we could not see her."

"You think that she went down?" asked Lucette, in a whisper.

"I am sure that she was whirled bottom upward, with the sail she had set, and went down with all on board," was the response.

"Captain Chester, tell me, please, do you think my brother was on board that vessel?" and the look on the face of the maiden was one that Loyd Chester never forgot, so full was it of anguish.

"I do not—in fact, I know that your brother was not, as I saw a seaman who went on board a vessel that sailed the night of his leaving home, to bid friends good-by, and he recognized your brother on the deck in the garb of a sailor."

"Thank Heaven! I am glad to know that he did not capture the brig, as my father avows."

"No, I learned this from one of my crew, on returning on board the *Vicious* this morning, and came at once to tell you."

"I did not speak of it to your father, told the seaman not to refer to it in any way; and as the brig is lost, he may as well appear to have gone down in her, for he will do no wrong, I am sure, and we will hear from him some of these days, and in no disparaging tones, for in my opinion, Miss Templeton, Tracey is no ordinary man."

"From my heart I thank you for these words, and believing all is as you say, Captain Chester, I will rest content now regarding Tracey, though there is a shadow upon his life that will be hard to remove."

What that shadow was Loyd Chester did not ask, and then Lucette turned to him with:

"May I ask you, Captain Chester, if you still have the suspicions against Captain Fanchon that you held?"

"Miss Lucette, Captain Fanchon is a remarkable man, and I feel that he is a man with a history."

"There is certainly some mystery about him, though what it is, I am unable to say."

"Feeling assured that he was playing a part in this port, for circumstantial evidence was against him, I determined to put him to the test, and so went on board his vessel, accompanied by Captain Lucius Sheldon."

"I asked him for the use of his schooner, if need be, as mine was undergoing repairs, and his being the only armed craft in port."

"I felt that I would be refused; but on the contrary I was entertained most royally, Marvel Shelley being there with him, and the result was he placed the *Restless* at my disposal, with or without his crew."

"I certainly could not think ill of him after that, for, if there was aught wrong, he would not have put his craft into my hands, for me to reach at will, and win over his crew."

"It certainly seems so."

"Of course, and that it was not bravado, he proved by getting under way and going in chase of the brig."

"So you do not think ill of him?"

"No, I do not, though I cannot understand him."

"Nor can I."

"His vessel is fitted up better than any craft in our navy to-day, and he lives in Oriental luxury, as to his cabin and appointments."

"So it is said."

"He is a man of refinement and education, and surrounds himself with books, music, paintings and rare *bijouterie*, strange things to have on board a vessel."

"Then the craft is under the strictest discipline, his word being law, and he has as servants a giant negro, Moro, and a negress Fanita, whom he addresses in some strange language."

"He is said to be very rich, and yet he is content to sail from port to port, trading in various cargoes, from which he can rarely make enough profit to pay the running expenses of his vessel."

"He is a strange man, Miss Lucette."

"He is, indeed," was the response, and the maiden was busy with her thoughts for a moment, when Loyd Chester broke the silence by coming over and seating himself by her side upon the sofa, while he said:

"Miss Lucette, I have something to say to you, if you will hear me?"

His look, his manner and words told her what was coming, and she said, anxious to have it over with:

"I will be glad to hear what you have to say, Captain Chester."

"That I love you, Lucette, I feel that you have long known, and now that I feel that I can speak, I will do so."

"I have before this been captain by courtesy only, but this morning I received official papers notifying me of my rank as such, and also some good news came to me that some investments I had made had turned out well."

"I am not rich, mind you, but I am well off, and, with a captain's commission at my age, for I am a young man, I feel that I can offer you my hand, as you have long held my heart."

"Will you take me as I am, Lucette, and some day become my wife?"

She did not tremble, or blush, for he had never awakened her love, such love as she could feel, though she had always admired him.

He seemed to see this, when he met her calm gaze, and it pained him, ere she spoke.

"Captain Chester," she said quietly, yet with feeling:

"I am honored in possessing your love, and I respect you as highly as any one I know; but I must frankly tell you, that though you are dear to me as a friend, I do not love you, as you would wish, nor can I."

"I am sorry to pain your noble heart, but I can never be your wife."

He drooped his head an instant, and then said, as he took her hand:

"I will not urge a forlorn hope, Lucette, so let us be friends, and, now that Tracey has gone, if you ever need the advice, the aid that a brother could give, remember to call upon me, and you will find me true."

"Now I must hurry back, for I have much to do on board ship."

She grasped his hand with both her own and said:

"Come to see me whenever you can, and if I need a brother's aid I will come to you."

"Good-by."

CHAPTER XIX.

CAPTAIN FANCHON MAKES AN EXPLANATION.

AFTER the departure of Captain Chester Lucette roamed listlessly about the house and grounds for an hour; then she went to her room, but she could not settle herself to read, paint or embroider, so she tried to sleep, and giving this up set to work to dress for dinner.

She was certainly very restless, and, from some reason made an exquisite toilet, after which she descended to the parlor.

Again came wheels upon the gravel drive, and a moment after Dorcas ushered into the parlor Captain Fanchon.

He looked very handsome in his uniform, was very courtly, and yet seemed to wear the same

impenetrable mask that concealed his every thought and feeling.

"I am glad to see you, Miss Templeton, looking so well, and, as I failed in my engagement to dine yesterday, I hope that I might presume to come for to-day."

"Certainly, Captain Fanchon, you are always welcome in a home that you saved from becoming a house of mourning."

The remark staggered him a little, and he replied:

"Does that mean that had it not been my fortune to save you from death, I would never have been welcome?"

"Oh, no, for I am always glad to welcome friends, while you certainly have a strong claim upon my friendship."

"I thank you; but has your father not come home?"

"No, though it is nearly his time."

"I called at his office and missed him, so supposed that he had returned."

"He will soon join us; but you do not appear like one who had been through such a terrible ordeal as last night must have been to you."

"In what respect, Miss Templeton, do you mean an ordeal?"

"The storm, which was really a tornado."

"My dear young lady, I had not given it a second thought, for in the latitude where I cruise most, they are so frequent we become accustomed to them."

"But not to such fearful scenes as was last night, surely?"

"Why it did not strike me as severe, though we did lose several men, and my fore-topmast was torn out; but that was on account of holding on to get near the brig."

"And you speak thus lightly of the storm, when our mansion shook terribly?"

"It was not as bad as we have frequently to ride out in West Indian waters."

"Why, I held on last night under reefed main-sail and fore-staysail, when I have seen blows in which I have had to scud under bare poles, or lay to and take it, and not be able to spread a stitch of canvas."

"Captain Chester spoke of the very superb way in which you handled your vessel."

"You have seen him then, Miss Templeton?"

"Yes, he left an hour or so ago."

"A fine fellow is Chester, and I was glad to serve him, and will do so again, if asked; but our cruise was a useless one."

"The brig then was lost?"

"The captain thought so, as did his crew."

"But you did not, you seem to imply?"

"I certainly do not, nor do my men, though we kept that to ourselves."

"You surprise me, Captain Fanchon."

"I tell you what I think, Miss Templeton."

"But why the mystery regarding the brig?"

"As Captain Chester and his crew believe her to be a pirate, or intending to become such, it is best that they think her at the bottom of the sea."

"Which you say is not the case?"

"I am sure that she is not, though she may have lost her topmasts."

"She was in the path of the storm and was hard hit?"

"True."

"And Captain Chester said he did not see her afterward."

"He did not look in the right place for her."

"What can you mean?"

"He and his crew looked about the spot where the storm had struck her, expecting to find her, or her wreck."

"And you?"

"I observed that the brig's commander, whoever he is, had acted wisely, and was ready to dash away before the storm, for the light sails he left her were evidently set as a blind for us, and lightly fastened purposely, they went on the first puff, leaving the vessel unharmed, while she immediately drove on with the gale, and in its very teeth, for I saw her pass us a moment after we got the shock of the tempest."

"Captain Fanchon, you surprise me, for Captain Chester did not suspect this."

"Oh, no; he is trained in a school to look upon matters as they should happen, while I have had a different schooling, and expect just the contrary of what may occur."

"Then the brig did not go down?"

"By no means."

"And where is she?"

"Doubtless comfortably hiding away in some secluded anchorage."

"For what purpose?"

"To carry out the intention of her commander."

"And that intention?"

"Ah! there you go beyond my depth, Miss Templeton."

"And who is her commander?"

"I am convinced that he is your brother, Miss Templeton."

"Ah, me! but why do you think so?"

"For one reason, no stranger to the brig could take her and handle her as she was handled, either before or during the storm."

"I see what you mean; but is that your only reason for thinking my brother commanded her?"

"No; for I saw her commander, with a very powerful glass that I have, and it struck me that he was none other than Captain Tracey Templeton."

"And did Captain Chester think so?"

"That was his opinion, and he knew your brother's bearing better than did I."

Lucette remembered that Captain Chester had heard the sailor's story after returning from the trip in chase of the brig, so she remained silent, while Captain Fanchon remarked:

"Had I not thought, Miss Templeton, that it was your brother I saw on the brig's deck, I would have captured her."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, for I could have done so."

"I saw the chase from the tower, Captain Fanchon, and beheld the schooner under every stitch of canvas that would draw, and yet the brig dropped her astern; slowly, I admit, though it was."

"Miss Templeton, I have several other sails I can put on the schooner than those you saw—inventions of my own for driving her before the wind, as she was then sailing—but I did not set them, nor even admit that I had such canvas to spread."

"On the contrary, I deadened the headway of the *Restless*."

"How could you do that, sir?" asked Lucette, "when Captain Chester and his men were on board?"

And it was certain that the maiden felt suspicious of the captain.

"Miss Templeton, when I recognized your brother on the deck, and saw that we were out-footing the brig and would catch her, I sent my lieutenant below to carry out a little device I have for regulating the speed of my schooner."

"The truth is, under the cabin-floor, in the stern of the schooner, are two small deadlights; but may I place confidence in you that you will not betray my secret, knowing that I acted to save your brother?"

"To save him?"

"Yes, for had he been taken, your father, owning the brig, would have had him hanged."

"I believe you, alas! But, yes; you can trust me."

"Then I will tell you that those little deadlights open, and out of each of them can be dropped a cable from twenty to a hundred fathoms in length, and so arranged as to be a great drag upon the schooner."

"This my lieutenant did, and the brig not only held her own but slightly crept away from us."

"Oh, Captain Fanchon!" and the tears dimmed the beautiful eyes of Lucette.

"It was for your sake and the sake of your brother that I acted, Miss Templeton."

Instantly Lucette put forth her hand and grasped that of the sailor, while she said:

"I thank you from my heart! Can I say more?"

"I ask no more, Miss Templeton."

"One thing I would ask you, Captain Fanchon."

"Yes, Miss Templeton?"

"If my father disposed of the brig, could he prosecute my brother for piracy?"

"Oh, no, not if he sold her, for that would end his claim on her."

"Will you do me a great favor, Captain Fanchon?"

"Certainly, Miss Templeton; anything that it is in my power to do."

Lucette arose and paced the room excitedly for a while, the sailor attentively regarding her.

Then she turned, and said:

"Captain Fanchon, the brig cost my father twenty thousand dollars."

"Yes, I should think so, for she is a splendid craft; and fast as the schooner is, under an altered rig she could be made to beat the *Restless*."

"Then, Captain Fanchon, I have jewels that will bring that sum, and I will give them to you that you may sell them and buy the brig, thus destroying my father's power to prosecute poor Tracey!" came the astounding request of Lucette.

CHAPTER XX.

LUCETTE'S PLEDGE.

CAPTAIN FANCHON was not a man to show the slightest emotion, and yet his look showed that he was actually astounded at the startling proposition of Lucette, to sell her jewels to save her brother from her father's anger.

"They are worth the sum, Captain Fanchon, for some of them were my grandmother's and mother's, and then both father and Tracey have been most liberal to me in their presents of gems, and their cost far exceeded what I ask you to sell them for."

"You mean for me to purchase the schooner in your name, of course?"

"Oh dear, no! for father would never let her go."

"I mean that you are to buy her for yourself, and in your name, for he would sell her to you."

"You would have to place a great trust in

me, Miss Templeton, which I could abuse, for I would have your jewels, and you nothing to show for them," he said, with a smile.

"I would have my brother's life to show for them, should he be taken and my father have the power to bring him to justice."

"True; but what would you say to your father about the missing jewels?"

"If he asked me, I should tell him frankly and face his anger."

"You are a brave girl, Miss Templeton; but let me propose another plan."

"Willingly, sir."

"That I buy the brig."

"That is what I ask."

"Nay, you do not understand me, for I wish to purchase the brig myself, with my own money, and you keep your jewels."

"No, no, Captain Fanchon; I would not impose upon you."

"It is no imposition, I assure you, for I wish another vessel, and no better one than the brig can be found; so I get the worth of my money."

"I will purchase her, with the understanding that your father will drop all right to prosecute your brother for his having cut her out."

"This is noble of you, Captain Fanchon, and you are indeed a friend!"

"I hope you will so believe me, Miss Templeton, for I am willing to serve you with my life!"

"You have certainly proven it."

"Let me do one thing more."

"Well, sir?"

"As the brig is at sea your father will doubtless be glad to sell her, and I will agree to sail in chase of her, capture her and bring her back."

"But my brother?" asked Lucette, quickly.

"He will not return with me, I assure you, Miss Templeton, while, all I can do for him it will be my pleasure to do."

"Oh, sir, you are so kind."

"Could I be other than kind to one I love as I do you, Lucette?—for let me tell you, that you are dearer to me than all else beside."

"I am nearly double your years, my child, but then that but makes me feel the stronger and know that my love is no idle passion."

"Since the night I held you in my arms in the sea, I have loved you, and my passion but increases with time."

"I asked your father for your hand, and I have his consent to offer my love to you, and beg you to accept it, for life has no charm for me without you."

"Will you answer me, Lucette, and tell me if I may hope?"

She sat like a statue, while her hand rested lightly in his firm grasp.

He was very handsome, pleading and fascinating, but she could not see beyond the glamour of his dark eyes.

She was very white, and her blood seemed cold.

She knew all that he said, all that he expected, and she would be frank with him.

He had been so kind to her, she felt that she could make some sacrifice.

So she said, and she looked him straight in the eyes:

"Captain Fanchon, you have been always so good to me, and to you I owe my life, so I know you feel that I cannot be indifferent to you."

"Just now you did all that I could ask, and more, and I will promise to be your wife, though it does not seem to me that I love you as I would wish to love the man I married."

"I saw a loveless match between my father and mother, and it seemed to be full of bitterness; but I admire you, I like you sincerely, you are so good to me, that I will try and love you as you wish, and believe I can do so."

"Are you willing to take me on those terms?"

"Gladly, for I will teach you to love me, Lucette."

"Will you not tell me something of yourself, for you never have done so?"

"Why should I worry you with talking of myself?"

"Yet I would like to hear."

"I will tell you that my father was a baronet, and a British naval officer, sent to the West Indies, where he held a position of commandante of an island belonging to Great Britain."

"There I was born, and I grew up on board of his vessel, and others, for I cruised to all parts of the world."

"My father got me a commission in the British navy, and I held it until one day I did something to offend my king, and was exiled."

"Since then, possessed of fortune, I have cruised at my leisure about the world, and was content so to do."

"Now that I have met you, I am only content to be near you."

"And you have never loved any one?"

"My mother died when I was an infant, I had no sisters or cousins to love, so I have no ties, my father being also dead."

"But I mean did you never love, as you say you love me?"

She saw him start, for iron-nerved though he was, he could not check it, and he felt that she had observed it, so he said:

"Yes, I loved once, and the one I loved is dead to me, her memory buried."

"Now, have I answered all you would know?"

"Yes, and I thank you."

"And you give me your promise to become my wife soon?"

"Within the next six months, yes."

"Not sooner?"

"No, not sooner."

"Well, I am too happy in your promise to argue the point— Ah! there comes your father," and as the carriage of the merchant drove up, Lucette hastily excused herself, and ascended to her room, while Captain Fanchon met Mr. Templeton at the front door, and they entered the library together.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BARGAIN.

MR. TEMPLETON seemed worried, when he entered the library with his visitor, while on the contrary Captain Fanchon appeared pleased.

"I have looked for you on board your vessel, at the club and elsewhere, and was disappointed in not finding you," he said, addressing the captain.

"And I went to your office for you, Mr. Templeton, and not finding you, drove out here to learn my destiny at the hands of your daughter."

"You have seen her?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the result?"

"Is satisfactory to me."

"She accepts?"

"She pledges me she will become my wife."

"That is good; but what argument did you use, for she does not love you?"

"Thank you; but she is willing to try."

"Bah! What do you care for love, anyway?"

"A great deal; but we will not discuss that point, as it is settled that Miss Templeton is to become my wife, and I wish to complete our business arrangements."

"You mean you desire to pay me the one hundred thousand dollars?"

"Yes, when I get your signature to this little paper, and also attend to another bargain between us."

"Do not call it a bargain, for it seems harsh."

"It is a bargain, though; still we will not dicker on the meaning of a word; but tell me, do you wish to sell your brig?"

"What brig?"

"There is but one I care to buy."

"There is but one you can buy, for the Lucette is at the bottom of the sea."

"Ah! who told you so?"

"Captain Chester."

"Well, it did look so, but still, I have an idea that she escaped, and I am willing to buy her."

"The Lucette?"

"Yes, for I have bought the fair lady after whom she was named, and I am superstitious enough to feel that I should possess both to have luck."

"Nonsense; you would not buy a bird in the air, would you?"

"Yes, or a fish in the sea."

"You mean that you would buy the brig, at sea, or lost, as the case might be?"

"Yes."

"Or run off with by pirates?"

"Yes."

"You wish to throw your money away?"

"Oh, no, for I will capture her."

"Ah!"

"That is my intention."

"How?"

"By pursuing her."

"To the bottom of the sea?"

"I will take my chances upon her being there."

"You are a strange man."

"Stranger than you think, did you know me you could say," was the smiling reply.

"And you are in earnest to buy this brig?"

"I am."

"Well, I'll sell her."

"What did she cost you?"

"Twenty thousand, just."

"I'll give you that sum cash for her."

"I'll take it."

"On conditions."

"Name them."

"That you relinquish all claim to prosecute any of her crew, from leader down, for having run off with her."

"But—"

"Say you'll do as I ask or not."

"Well, make my son the exception."

"Not a single exception."

"Well, as you can never get her, I may as well."

"Why do you think I will never capture her?"

"Because I believe she went down with all on board."

"I do not."

"And you are willing to pay twenty thousand to back up your opinion?"

"I am."

"When?"

"As soon as you have signed this paper."

"Ah! what is it?"
 "Your pledge not to prosecute any one for the running off with the brig."
 "Here, I will write it."
 He hastily wrote a few lines, and then handed it to the merchant, who carefully read it over.
 "I will sign this."
 "You are wise to do so."
 "But the other payment?"
 "I have the money, in large bank bills with me, and, when you sign also the other paper, of our bargain for the hand of Miss Templeton, I will pay you the money down."
 "Give me the papers."
 The two were quietly handed him, and, after reading them carefully over, the merchant affixed his signature, saying abruptly:
 "Now, the money."
 "Count this packet over please," and Captain Fanchon gave him a roll of bills of large denominations.
 "There are twenty thousand dollars here."
 "Now this one, please."
 Again did the merchant devote himself to the pleasing occupation of counting money, and after he had finished, said abruptly:
 "This is also correct."
 "Then our bargains are completed."
 "Yes, if you insist upon calling your engagement to my daughter a bargain."
 "It is nothing more, as far as you and I are concerned."
 "Call it what you please, sir; but I suppose I am to claim you to dinner?"
 "With pleasure, and then I shall sail to-night in pursuit of the brig."
 "You will never find her."
 "Perhaps; but if I do not it is my loss, your gain."
 "Suppose Captain Chester should need the aid of a vessel-of-war, while you are absent?"
 "I will feel sorry to put him to inconvenience, but his Government must bear the blame, not I, for leaving him in the lurch."
 "Ah! here comes Miss Templeton," and Lucette came into the room, looking very beautiful.
 She kissed her father affectionately, and said:
 "Captain Fanchon has doubtless told you, father, that I have promised to become his wife some day."
 "Yes, my child, and I wish you both much happiness."
 "And permit me to add, Miss Templeton, that having won you, I was selfish enough to wish your namesake, and I have therefore purchased from your father the brig, with all rights and titles thereto."
 Lucette looked pleased, and gave Captain Fanchon a look that he fully understood.
 "You have taken a great risk in buying a vessel that is not in port, have you not?" she said.
 "Oh no, for I start in search of her to-night, and I think my usual good fortune will not desert me, and that I can bring her back."
 "And what will you do with her if you get her?" asked Mr. Templeton.
 "I have an order from the Columbian Government to purchase and arm a vessel for service in the Caribbean Sea, and I shall sell her to that young nation."
 "Arming her here?"
 "Certainly, for I can secure all the arms I need, I think, and also a crew here better than elsewhere."
 "I suppose you will realize a handsome profit thereon?"
 "Oh, yes, I hope to do so," and the merchant felt sorry that he had not been permitted to share in the venture, as he thought to himself:
 "He'll double his money on her."
 Soon after dinner was announced, and the three sat down to the table to enjoy the meal, for Mr. Templeton was a *bon vivant*.
 During the dinner Lucette told of the coming ashore of the young officer, and her father made known how she had boldly gone up to the cupola and lighted the beacon.
 "And I have seen that it shall not occur again," she said laughingly, "for I had new glass, and of a thicker quality, put in to-day, father, as I care not for another such a trip heavenward."
 "You are a noble girl, Miss Templeton, and besides the good that you know you accomplished in saving this young officer, there is doubtless much that you are not aware of, for I heard a captain of a merchantman say to-day, that he would have gone ashore but for the timely lighting of the Temple Beacon."
 "Indeed, I am glad to hear this, and I am more than repaid for the risk I ran," and Lucette began to feel a deeper interest in the man before her, for it seemed now that there was not the mask upon his face which he had formerly worn to her.
 Soon after dinner he took his leave, bidding her farewell with his usual distant courtesy, and three hours after, as she sat at the window gazing out upon the moonlit waters, she saw the Restless standing seaward, and from her lips came the prayer:
 "God bless that man."

CHAPTER XXII.

EXPLANATIONS NEEDED.

THE morning following the departure of the Restless on her search for the brig, Mr. Templeton was up bright and early, and learned from Bent the boatman that the schooner had gone to sea during the night, for the merchant had retired early and therefore had not seen her.
 Then he asked Dorcas regarding the invalid guest.
 "He was much better last night, sir, and said he hoped he would not have to tax your kindness after to-day."
 "Did him feel that it is my pleasure to entertain him, and that he must remain as long as he so pleases?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Say that I had company last evening, or would have seen him, and that I was called to town earlier than usual this morning."
 "Yes, sir."
 "And say to Miss Templeton that I could not wait breakfast for her this morning, as I had to go into town."
 "Yes, sir."
 "And, Dorcas?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Last night I heard that one of the pet animals belonging to that old East Indian captain, who bought the Gayoso farm above, had escaped from its cage, so keep an eye out for it."
 "I'll do it, sir, indeed I will," and Dorcas cast an eye about the grounds, as though expecting to see the animal.
 "They may have captured it, but as I drove out last night I met his man who said the beast had escaped, as a tree had fallen upon one corner of the cage and broken it in during the storm of the night before last."
 "Was it a monkey, sir?"
 "No, you fool; he said it was a tiger."
 "A tiger, sir! breakfast is waitin' sir," and Dorcas hastened in off of the piazza, where he had gone to tell his master that his breakfast waited.
 With a hundred and twenty thousand dollars in his pocket, which would pay all of his debts, and leave him a balance of nearly thirty thousand, Mr. Templeton had little appetite, and hastily swallowed a cup of coffee, ate a roll and entering his carriage drove to the city.
 The banks had not been long open when he made his appearance, asked in an indifferent way for his notes, took them up, deposited the balance to his credit, and walked back to his office feeling better than he had for many a long day.
 "A letter for you, sir," said his confidential clerk.
 He took it and recognized the writing of Captain Fanchon.
 It was sealed, and marked "private."
 Opening the seal he read:
 "ON BOARD SCHOONER RESTLESS."
 "MY DEAR MR. TEMPLETON:—
 "I sail in a short time on my search for the brig.
 "I write, by the same bearer who gives you this, a line to Captain Chester, to the effect that I have reason to believe that the brig was not lost, and I go in pursuit of her, hoping soon to return.
 "Will you do me the kindness to speak a good word for my friend Marvel Shelley, who is desperately in love with banker Vancouver's daughter?
 "He has reformed his evil ways and appears to be a fine fellow, and I think a word from you with the banker would work wonders, for I am inclined to think that the young lady would consent.
 "I trust you will see me soon return, with the brig following in my wake.
 "Kindly give the accompanying package to Miss Templeton, with my sincere regard, and greatly oblige,
 Yours to command,
 "FRANK FANCHON."
 "Was there a package accompanying this note, Rule?" asked the merchant.
 "Yes, sir, and, as it was marked 'valuable,' I put it in the strong box," answered the clerk.
 "All right, keep it there, but give it to me when I start for him."
 "Has Captain Chester been in this morning?"
 "No, sir."
 "Or Captain Sheldon?"
 "Yes, sir, and he said he would return; there comes Captain Chester now," and Rule pointed out beyond the wharf where a man-of-war's boat was seen rapidly approaching the water stairs near the shipping office of Leonard Templeton.
 "Something has gone wrong, for Chester looks excited, and, yes, Sheldon is with him," said the merchant, as the two officers approached his office at a rapid pace.
 "Good-morning, gentlemen," the merchant said, in his stilted way, as they entered.
 "Good-morning, Mr. Templeton; but are you aware that a vessel was run out of this harbor last night?" excitedly said Loyd Chester.
 "I have just received a letter from Captain Fanchon telling me that he had sailed in search of my brig, which he had heard had been seen off the harbor, as I understand it."
 "True, and I have a letter from him to that effect, and yet, just prior to his departure, an East India craft, just come in yesterday, and with a most valuable cargo, was boarded by a boat, pretending to be a customs barge, and her crew were overpowered and the vessel seized."
 "Impossible!"

"It is true; but the worst of it is that a harbor boatman said that he recognized Captain Fanchon in the barge."
 "That cannot be, for Fanchon was out at my house to dinner until a late hour, and then he returned to town, and almost immediately after sailed in his schooner."
 "I cannot understand it; but I will call the boatman."
 The man, a harbor waterman was summoned from the boat, and Captain Chester said:
 "My man, tell this gentleman what you saw."
 "I saw a shore boat row out to the strange schooner, and in it was her captain; and, as I came back from rowing an officer over to Fort Winthrop, I saw a barge full of men leave the schooner's side, and in the stern was that strange captain."
 "Where did they go?"
 "Alongside of the East Indian clipper, sir."
 "Well?"
 "I heard him say something about Customs boat, and there seemed some little excitement on board after they boarded; but I was tired, so pulled ashore, and would have forgotten it, but for the fact that the East Indian was gone this morning, no one knew where, and so I went over and reported what I had seen to Captain Chester."
 "Now, Mr. Templeton, after all, sir, that man is not what he represents himself, and each time he has been in port some act of this kind has occurred."
 "I tell you, sir, I believe he is a—"
 "Hold, sir! Captain Fanchon is my intended son-in-law, Captain Chester, and I will not allow even you to speak against him without positive proof that he has done wrong," and Mr. Templeton's words rung out clear and stern.
 "Your intended son-in-law?" gasped Loyd Chester, and he fairly staggered under the blow.
 "Lucette to be his wife?" almost groaned Lucius Sheldon, turning white as a corpse.
 "Yes, gentlemen, and I am fully aware of just who and what Captain Frank Fanchon is, and, though appearances are against him here, I shall demand that you wait to hear his story of this affair, for I shall tell him your words concerning him."
 "I never say aught behind the back of a man that I fear to say to his face, Mr. Templeton, and you can so tell Captain Fanchon."
 "For the sake of your daughter, who you say is his promised wife, I shall not do as I had intended, seize him and his vessel the moment he returned to port, but first hear his explanation of the affair."
 "Then, if I do not deem it satisfactory, I shall be forced to act, painful as it will be to me on Miss Templeton's account."
 "In the mean time, Mr. Templeton, I would like to charter the brig now under command of Captain Sheldon, and place on board of her some of my cutter's guns, and use her as a gun-boat for the harbor, for the Vicious will not be ready for service for some ten days, and the harbor must not be left unguarded any longer."
 "The brig is at your service, sir, without charter money, for you are to protect my interests as well as others."
 "I thank you, and I would wish to retain Captain Sheldon and his men on board, in place of those of my crew needed on the cutter."
 "If Captain Sheldon is willing, sir, I surely am."
 Thus it was arranged, and Lucius Sheldon ran his vessel over to where the cutter lay, to get the guns on board, while Mr. Templeton called to Rule to give him the package for Lucette, as he was going home.
 A leather case was handed him, the tiny key fastened thereto, and opening it, the merchant glanced at the contents.
 "Good God! those jewels in his hands?" and Leonard Templeton was as white as a ghost, as his trembling hands took up a necklace of pearls, to which was suspended a star of rubies, with a large solitaire diamond of great beauty in the center.
 "It is the same, for chance could not make two so alike."
 "Yes; here is the clasp, formed of gold bands, clasped, and on the reverse of the star are engraved the same words—*Le jour viendra*.
 "Great God! how did he come in possession of this necklace?"
 "I will not give it to Lucette, but await his return, for, like Chester, I too need an explanation," and the merchant drove homeward, his face sterner than was its wont, and very pale; but he had left the jewels in the iron box in his office.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DEAD-SHOT.

AS soon as his master was gone, Dorcas made it his business to spread the news about the escaped tiger among the servants, of whom there were a goodly number at the mansion, for the merchant spared no expense in keeping up the style worthy of one of his name and reputed wealth.
 But his thrilling story was nipped in the bud, when Mr. Templeton's coachman came back and

said that the tiger had returned to his cage himself, and had thus been retaken, for a boy had told him so whom he met on the highway on coming out.

"It's a shame, it is," said Dorcas, "for an old man to keep such pets."

"Now he has several tigers, a lion, snakes, birds, monkeys, and other dangerous animals," and Dorcas did not understand the laugh that followed until he was asked if he considered monkeys and birds dangerous animals.

It having been explained to him how he made them so, by the use of the word "other," he became disgusted, and with the remark to his master's head gardener, "You are too grammatical, Felix, for your own good," he left the kitchen to go in and serve the invalid officer with breakfast.

To him he said nothing about the escaped tiger, nor to Lucette either, and after breakfast the maiden took her accustomed stroll through the grounds.

She saw that the sloop that had come ashore had been gotten off, and that the grounds had been thoroughly cleared of the storm wrecks, while the roof of the boat-house had been replaced and repaired.

Bent, as usual, was down among the boats, and he imparted to her the information that he had seen the schooner go out to sea.

"Yes, I saw her myself, Bent, for I was at my window."

"And they do say, miss, for I saw a fisherman this morning, that a large East Indian clipper was cut out of the harbor last night."

"Indeed? and by whom?"

"I saw her going out, and she was sailing along most peaceable like; but she was then in the hands of pirates."

"Pirates, Bent?"

"Yes, miss, so they says."

"This is remarkable."

"Nobody else but pirates, miss, would cut a vessel out of harbor."

"True; but it is so strange that these things occur right in this crowded port."

"It is strange, miss, and they are getting awful frequent of late, and they do say as how the schooner is suspected."

"What schooner?"

"Captain Fanchon's, miss."

"Bent, you must not listen to such idle stories, for Captain Fanchon is a gentleman, and the friend of my father and myself."

"I know it, miss, and he's a mighty nice gentleman and gives fees like a king; but folks will talk, because it has happened each time when he was in port that some vessel has been cut out or some deviltry done."

"It is cruel for people to talk so, and he will be very angry when he returns and learns how they talk."

"This afternoon, Bent, I wish to sail over to the fort and visit my friend, Miss Nazro, so have the yacht ready."

"I will, miss; and it'll be a pleasant afternoon for a sail, I'm thinking."

And Bent touched his tarpaulin as Lucette turned away, retracing her steps to the house.

There she got her flower-basket and shears, and proceeded to the garden.

Selecting the best roses and other flowers, she clipped them off, intending to make another large bouquet for the officer guest.

Wishing to secure some sprigs of geranium from plants growing near the south wing of the mansion, she approached near the window of the invalid's room.

The sash was up to let in the balmy air, and she stepped quietly, not wishing to attract his attention to her.

She clipped off several fine sprigs, and had turned to walk away, when she came to a sudden halt and stood motionless, her eyes fixed with a stare upon an object before her.

There, only a few feet distant, crouching beneath the shelter of an oleander, was an object frightful enough to strike terror to the bravest heart.

It was a huge tiger, prepared for a spring, and noiselessly wagging his tail against his tawny sides.

A brute of great power and large size, with his jaws partly opened, his glittering eyes fastened upon his prey, he crouched ready for the fatal spring.

To save her life, Lucette could not have moved or uttered a cry.

Her feet seemed rooted to the ground, and her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

To have moved or cried out would have precipitated the spring of the wild beast.

Her eyes met those of the tiger, for she had not the power to look away.

She was fascinated, and death was before her, and she gave up all hope.

Suddenly she saw the fierce eyes of the tiger turn from her own, over her shoulder, a savage growl came from his red mouth, and he drove his claws into the ground for the spring.

Lucette saw his body rise, heard a sharp report, beheld the animal fall heavily in a heap, almost at her very feet, and heard his cry of anguish and fury.

Then she felt herself falling, felt an arm about her waist, and she knew no more.

When she recovered consciousness she was in the library.

She heard the hum of voices about her, and rapid steps, and beheld the black face of old Aunt Rachel bending over her.

The negress was bathing her face with perfumed water, and holding to her nostrils a bottle of smelling-salts.

"Tank God, Missy Lu, you hain't dead, and dat's what de gemman said."

"Was it a horrible dream, Aunt Rachel?"

"Bout dat tiger brute, missy?"

"Yes," and Lucette shuddered.

"Guesses 'twan't no dream, honey, for de beast were goin' ter spring on yer when de gemman fired."

"What gentleman?" and Lucette half-arose from the sofa.

"Dat young officer, missy."

"Did he kill the brute?"

"Yes, missy, he were sittin' in his room, he say, cleanin' of his pistol, which had gotted wet when he was in the sea, and he had asked Dorcas to bring him some powder and bullets, for he said he felt well enough to walk out on de shore and shoot at some gulls he seen from the window."

"He'd jist loaded the we'pon, when he seen your hat out of de window, and risin' up, he seen de tiger."

"Den he shot, and jist in time, and jumping out of de window he grabbed you in his arms, and took you out of reach of de tiger's claws, for de beast were dyin' hard, he say, with a bullet in his head, right atween de eyes."

"Dat gemman am a dead shot, Missy Lu, and he hab save your life."

Lucette shuddered, covered her face with her hands for a moment, and then said:

"Is he able to leave his room, Aunt Rachel?"

"Oh, yes, missy, and I have pressed out his uniform, and Dorcas took him in massa's razor to shave, and he do look awful han'some, I tell yer, chile."

"Shall I tell him you want to see him, missy?"

"No, but present my compliments, and tell him I will be glad to have him join me at lunch."

"Yes, missy," and while Lucette went up to her room, old Rachel hastened off with her message to the young officer.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TOO LATE.

It was seldom that merchant Templeton returned home to lunch, and consequently it was a meal that Lucette ate alone, unless she had company at the villa.

But now, as she was aware that the young officer in the spare room was able to be out, she had asked him, through Aunt Rachel, to join her at lunch, for it gave her an opportunity to thank him for having saved her from a terrible death.

She could look back upon the time when she had been snatched from drowning with some complacency, for it was after all not such a fearful way of ending life, when compared with being torn to pieces by a wild beast.

Changing her morning dress for one more suitable in which to meet a stranger, Lucette descended to the dining-room.

Dorcas stood there silent, and with a triumphant look upon his face, for after all the tiger had been seen, and so the laugh had not long remained against him.

"Has the gentleman come from his room yet, Dorcas?" asked Lucette.

"He is upon the piazza, miss; but let me say, miss, how happy I am that the wild tiger did not devour you, and the brave gentleman is a good shot."

"I thank you, Dorcas, for I did indeed escape a fearful fate; but where is the tiger?"

"Upon the lawn where he fell, miss, for bless you, no one of us would go near him."

Then Lucette went out upon the piazza.

As she was about to step out of the door, her eyes fell upon the stranger, as he stood gazing seaward.

He was tall, an Apollo in form, attired in an undress uniform, and his pose was one of easy grace.

His face she did not see, but his appearance was imposing and striking.

Her father had told her his name, and stepping toward him, as he turned quickly at the rustle of her dress, she said:

"Lieutenant Burr, I believe?"

"Miss Templeton, I am most happy to meet you," and he bowed low with a courtly grace.

But she held out her hand and said with deep feeling:

"Mr. Burr, accept my heartfelt thanks for your act this day, which saved me from a frightful death, and remember, wherever you be, every night will I offer up to God a prayer for your happiness."

She then looked into his face, and, quick as a flash of lightning, what she read there came upon her in all its vivid truth.

It was a sun-browned face, frank as a child's, noble in expression and full of fortitude and character.

It was a face to admire, to respect, to love, and

to win no fickle love but all the affection, the passion a woman could bestow.

And into her beautiful face he gazed, with a look so intense, so full of admiration and respect, that she felt all that his brilliant eyes expressed, and she bowed her head, while the crimson stole over her cheeks, before very pale, for she had not yet recovered from the fearful shock to her nerves.

"A prayer from your lips for me, Miss Templeton, would be a boon I would crave, and well know I it would not remain unanswered," he said in his rich voice, though in his manner of expressing himself there was not a shadow of flattery, where in others there might have been.

"I hope you are recovering your former good health, sir," she said.

"Ah yes, I am quite myself to day, for it was merely a case of utter exhaustion from a long and desperate swim in a rough sea, with my clothes on, and belt of arms too; but I owe my life to you, Miss Templeton, for the beacon alone saved me, as I knew not which way to swim, and your old servant told me of your daring climb into the cupola, and how you lighted the lamp at the risk of your own death."

"I felt that the beacon should be lighted, and so did it myself, as others would not; but come into lunch with me, and then we will go and have a look at that savage tiger."

"With your permission, Miss Templeton, I will have him stuffed and dressed, and you can stand him in the hall as a reminder of—of—me, can I say?"

"I will accept the tiger, dressed as you wish, sir, but I will not need his presence to remind me of one to whom I owe my life," and Lucette placed her hand lightly upon his arm and he led her in to lunch.

It was a pleasant meal, between the two, and after it was over they went out to see the savage brute.

He lay on the sward where he had fallen, just four feet from the spot on which Lucette had stood.

Her hat, basket of flowers and shears lay upon the ground, where she had dropped them, and the sharp claws of the fierce animal had torn up the earth in his dying struggles.

Even in death, with the blood trickling from the wound between his eyes, he was fearful to look upon, and his huge teeth grinned fiercely.

"He is a superb specimen, and one of the largest of his kind I ever saw; he will make a splendid souvenir of to-day's adventure Miss Templeton," said Dudley Burr with a smile.

"You are certainly a sure shot, Lieutenant Burr."

"I never had greater cause to congratulate myself, that I am, than for to-day's work."

"How strange that I should have clung to that pistol in the water, though I knew it was weighing me down; but it was a dueling weapon that had served my father well on several fields, and he had told me never to part with it, and certainly I shall never do so after its record to-day; but see, is not that your father coming, for I have come to know his carriage?"

"Yes, it is father, and we will meet him on the piazza."

A few moments after Mr. Templeton sprung out of his carriage, and he looked a little surprised to see his guest out of his room; but Lucette told the story of her rescue, and the three went around to see the tiger, the merchant seeming deeply moved at the fearful danger that his daughter had passed through, and grasping Dudley Burr's hand, wrung it in silence that was more expressive than words.

As her father had returned early, Lucette asked him and Lieutenant Burr to join her in a run over to the fort to see her friend, and a pleasant afternoon was passed upon the water in a sail, while the young officer became a hero when the story of his killing the tiger was told.

Returning to a late dinner, they enjoyed it greatly, and Dudley Burr proved himself a charming story-teller and conversationalist, while in the evening he joined Lucette in singing, and his rich baritone voice delighted even the merchant, who had never been partial to music.

It was late when they separated, and going to her room, Lucette threw herself, all dressed as she was, upon her bed, and moaned over and over again:

"Too late! too late! I have at last met the one man in the world to me; but alas! too late! too late!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RESTLESS AND HER PRIZE.

SEVERAL days passed away after the sailing of the Restless, and she did not appear.

Captain Chester, with guns mounted on the merchant brig, had cruised about the harbor and out to sea, in the hope of finding the West Indian schooner, or the stolen clipper, for he believed the brig Lucette to really be at the bottom of the sea.

With him was Lucius Sheldon, and the two were much together, for Loyd Chester had told his friend of his unrequited love affair, and the two had a bond between them of sympathy the one for the other.

The old merchant appeared contented, for he had paid his notes, had no debts, and he had

dismissed his son wholly from his heart and mind.

He did say to himself:

"That man Fanchon is not one to brook insult from Chester, and I think trouble will come between them, so I wish that he was already married to Lucette, or at least had made his will in her favor."

"If I scent a duel in the air I will speak to him upon the subject, while I must also have an explanation about that jewel necklace."

At Seaside Temple all went along in the even tenor of its way, for Dudley Burr had bidden farewell to his host and hostess, and taken a packet for Portland to see his parents, for he had been gone from home three years.

He took with him Lucette's heart, and left his in her keeping, though not a word of love had been spoken between them.

After his departure Lucette had resigned herself to her fate; but in her heart was a hope that something would prevent her marriage with Captain Fanchon, now that she had found one whom she loved with her whole soul.

"If I only had the money to pay back to Captain Fanchon, what he let father have, I would sever my engagement with him at once," she said over and over again to herself.

The tiger had been sent by the young officer to a taxidermist, after he had purchased the body from its owner, and when it came to Seaside Temple, Lucette felt that she would have something before her continually to remind her of Dudley Burr.

One day the newly-armed brig was cruising about the Brewster Islands, when from the mast-head rung out in the crisp morning air:

"Sail, ho!"

"Ay, ay, whereaway?" answered Lucius Sheldon who held the deck, and was acting as lieutenant under Captain Chester.

"Just rounding Grover's Cliff, sir, and I think it is the schooner."

"Ay, ay, I see her," and Lucius Sheldon called down the companionway for Captain Chester who came at once on deck.

Glasses were at once turned upon the vessel, and Loyd Chester said:

"It is the Restless, and she is coming this way."

"Sail ho!" again sung out the man at the mast-head.

"Ay, ay, and it is the brig!" almost shouted Lucius Sheldon, who could not fail to recognize, even at that distance, a vessel he had known so well.

"By Neptune! but you are right, Sheldon. It is the Restless and the Lucette."

"Yes, and, following as the brig does in the schooner's wake, it shows that she is a prize."

"True, and she did not sink in the storm after all."

"So it seems, sir."

"Well, now, what does this mean?"

"That Captain Fanchon has captured her."

"I almost doubt it; but we will run in behind Lovell's Island and see if he intends to bring her into port."

The brig was accordingly put away, and ran back toward the harbor, and a lookout was stationed to watch the movements of the schooner and brig.

"We can do nothing if he should not come in, for we can catch neither the brig or the schooner," said Lucius Sheldon.

"Still we will have a hold upon Fanchon, and know if he is playing a tricky part, so we can act should he come in again."

"Yes, we can do that."

It was not very long before the two vessels hove in sight of the watchers, the schooner slightly leading, and both coming along swiftly under the fair breeze that came out of the northwest.

When they changed their course to sail into the harbor, Captain Chester said:

"He is coming in, so we will run near and hail him, for I am anxious to know where he got the brig."

Half an hour after the brig was holding on across the bows of the two vessels, now sailing side by side; but, putting her helm up, she ranged along to the starboard of the Lucette, and the three were abreast, and not a cable's length dividing them.

The armed brig was to windward, and seeing that she could not hold her own with the other two fleet vessels, Chester ordered more sail to be set, and then hailed:

"Ahoy the brig!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Is that you, Captain Fanchon?"

"No, sir, Captain Fanchon is on board the schooner."

"I am Lieutenant Farwell," was the reply of the officer, looking over the high bulwarks of the Lucette.

"You have captured the brig, I see."

"Yes, sir."

"Where did you find her?"

"Off Portsmouth, sir, near the Isle of Shoals."

"When was it?"

"Last night, sir."

"You are running up to our anchorage now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I will see Captain Fanchon when he drops anchor," and the three vessels sailed on in silence.

The Lucette and Restless had no topsails set, only lower sails, and yet, while the merchant brig, by no means a slow vessel, had all up that would draw, they kept her busy to hold her own with them.

Thus the three passed Seaside Villa, almost abreast, and Captain Fanchon dipped his flag and fired three guns as a salute.

Not to be outdone Loyd Chester did likewise, and Bent was seen to dip the flag ashore in response, while Lucette was visible upon the piazza waving her scarf.

Running up to his old anchorage Captain Fanchon dropped anchor, the brig following suit right astern, and Loyd Chester anchoring in such a way that it would not be an easy thing for either vessel to get out to sea without coming under the guns of himself and the forts.

"That young naval officer is still suspicious of us, Farwell," called out Captain Fanchon back to the brig with a light laugh.

"I observe that, sir," was the response, and then Lieutenant Farwell attracted his captain's attention to a boat putting off from the armed brig, and another from the shore.

Captain Fanchon turned his attention first upon the former, and said half aloud:

"Captain Chester is coming to see me, and with him is Lucius Sheldon."

Then he looked at the other boat with the remark:

"And there comes old Mr. Templeton; yes, and he has Marvel Shelley with him."

"Ho, Moro, put refreshments and decanters on the table, for I am to have visitors," he called down the companionway to his negro steward, and then he ordered a young officer to have a guard ready to receive Captain Chester with honors.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CAPTAIN FANCHON AT BAY.

MR. LEONARD TEMPLETON'S boat was the first to reach the side of the schooner, and, as Marvel Shelley grasped the hand of Captain Fanchon, he whispered:

"Chester is deuced suspicious of you, and has cast reflections upon you in many ways, while old Templeton seems also to have some cause of grievance."

"Thank you, Shelley," and Fanchon smiled.

Then he greeted Mr. Templeton warmly, asked them to pardon him a moment while he received Captain Chester, and met the latter at the gangway, the guard saluting the naval officer, who was accompanied by Lucius Sheldon.

If Captain Chester had intended refusing the hand of Captain Fanchon, under the suspicion he held him, he had not the opportunity, for the West Indian bowed in his courtly way to the two visitors, and said:

"Come into the cabin, gentlemen, where you will find friends who have just arrived."

"I know not what to think of this man, Sheldon," whispered Chester.

"Nor do I; he is more than ever a mystery," and they entered the cabin and were greeted by the merchant and Marvel Shelley.

"Now, gentlemen, there is brandy and wine, and I hope you will join me in drinking to the captain of the stolen brig," said Fanchon.

They all bowed, dashed off the toast, and the merchant, who was very uneasy, said:

"Now, Fanchon, let us know all about it."

"Well, gentlemen, having received word that the brig had been seen—"

"From whom did you receive word, sir?" abruptly asked Loyd Chester, who, knowing that Fanchon was his successful rival for the hand of Lucette, felt very disagreeable toward him.

"That, Captain Chester, is my own affair, if you will pardon me," was the cool reply, and Fanchon continued:

"I, upon hearing that the brig had been seen, went to sea to endeavor to capture her."

"As officer of this port, sir, you should have reported the fact to me."

"Pardon me again, Captain Chester, but I felt I was wholly able to retake my own property without asking you to come on board my schooner and aid me."

"Your own property, sir?"

"Yes, sir, for the brig belongs to me."

"Is this true, Mr. Templeton?"

"It certainly is, for I sold the craft to Captain Fanchon."

"Captain Chester, my word, sir, should have sufficed, without an appeal to Mr. Tem-

pleton; but I let it pass, sir, as you are my guest."

"I wish to know regarding the capture of the brig," and Loyd Chester was almost trembling with temper, which seemed to be getting the better of him.

"But for your interruption, sir, you would have known ere this."

"I ran out, gentlemen, in search of the brig, and found her hiding away in-shore, so headed for her, when she was run aground by her commander, boats were launched, and the crew, after setting her on fire, put ashore."

At the risk of burning my schooner I ran alongside, extinguished the fire, and took the vessel, after which I sent a force ashore in the endeavor to capture the crew."

"They had scattered, however, and I got only three boats, and with these returned to my schooner."

"As soon as I put the brig in shape, for the storm seemed to have handled her roughly, and the fire did her some harm, I set sail for port, and, as you escorted me up the harbor, Captain Chester, you know the rest."

"And what about the East Indian packet ship?" almost hissed Loyd Chester.

"To what ship do you refer, sir?"

"The East Indian clipper ship, sir, that was seized, and run out by pirates just before you sailed in your schooner?"

"Indeed! Was she taken, after all?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that when I returned to my vessel, sir, after having dined with Mr. Templeton at his home, I found a man awaiting me from on board the East Indian."

"He told me that he was a sailor on the clipper, had gone ashore and heard about the brig, and that when the clipper had stood in-shore on a tack, he had seen a vessel, apparently hiding, that answered the description of the Lucette."

"You may remember, Captain Chester, that I did not really think the brig had been lost in the storm, and so, having purchased her from Mr. Templeton, I determined to look her up."

"This man also told me that the officers of the clipper had been seized by the crew, who were to run her out and dispose of her valuable cargo, and he mistook my vessel for a Government craft, and so came to me."

"I immediately ordered a crew into a boat, and went on board the clipper, where I found the officers as stated, in irons, and released them, giving them control of the ship again."

"The ringleaders were ironed, and the captain said he could hold his vessel, but I left him some of my crew, and advised him to run up near the port and anchor."

"I saw him get under way, but paid no attention to where he went, and soon after headed seaward myself; but now you tell me that the clipper went to sea after all."

"She did, sir."

"And carried my men with her, it seems?"

"Yes."

"Where is the man that told you this story of the brig and the mutiny on board the clipper?"

"I left him on the clipper."

Captain Chester was disgusted at the explanation, for not a flaw could he discover in it to find fault with, while Mr. Templeton muttered to himself:

"I wonder if he can explain about the jewels half as well?"

But Captain Chester was angry, for he felt that he had had Fanchon in a tight place, and now saw him slip out of it.

If he could prove the West Indian a villain, he would save Lucette from him, and perhaps could claim her love in the end.

His temper got the better of his calm judgment, and he said, in a sneering way:

"Captain Fanchon, every time your vessel is in this port some act of piracy is committed, and I have cause to suspect you; but if you are what I believe you, you certainly are a most accomplished trickster in covering up your tracks."

All started at the insulting words, except Frank Fanchon, who smiled, raised his glass to his lips, took a sip of wine, and then said, in his suave way:

"Although my guest, sir, you have transgressed the bounds of hospitality and human endurance, so I hope you will pardon my act," and he dashed the contents of his

glass directly into the face of the angry officer.

Instantly all were upon their feet, excepting Fanchon, who said coolly:

"Be seated, gentlemen, for do not allow Captain Chester's departure to disturb you."

Livid with rage, Loyd Chester drew his handkerchief across his face, bowed in silence, and departed, accompanied by Lucius Sheldon, while Fanchon arose and escorted them with silent courtesy to the gangway.

Returning to the cabin he said, quietly:

"Shelley, I shall hear from Captain Chester, and I would like to have you act for me in the matter."

"With pleasure, Fanchon; but I regret exceedingly the necessity."

"As do I; but I think that Captain Sheldon and Mr. Templeton will admit that I put up with insult to a degree beyond forbearance."

"You surely did, Captain Fanchon, and I cannot understand Chester's hostile attitude toward you," answered the merchant, and soon after he took his departure, accompanied by the captain, leaving Marvel Shelley on board the schooner, to await the coming of a communication from Loyd Chester.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE JEWEL NECKLACE.

It was at the request of Mr. Templeton that Captain Fanchon had accompanied him ashore.

The merchant had been more than satisfied with the explanation of the West Indian regarding the capture of the brig, and the flight of the clipper ship, and he was anxious to have the jewel necklace affair explained away with equal satisfaction.

It was in the iron box at the office, and, as Shelley had to remain on the schooner, to meet a friend coming from the insulted naval officer, he had therefore requested Captain Fanchon to go ashore with him.

This he did, and the serious air of the merchant led the captain to suspect that something had gone wrong.

"I hope that Miss Templeton is in the enjoyment of good health?" he asked, wishing to get at the cause of the merchant's manner.

"Yes, though she owes it to the guest I had in the house, for a few days, that she is not now in her grave," was the reply of the merchant, and he told the story of the tiger's attack.

Frank Fanchon's indifferent manner left him for once, and he seemed deeply moved, while he said:

"God bless that brave, noble fellow, and he shall certainly be rewarded in some way, for what he has done."

"He is a naval officer, Captain Fanchon."

"That may be, sir, but still he can be shown in some way that I appreciate his courage."

They had now reached the office, and telling Kule to wait outside, Mr. Templeton closed the door and said:

"First, let me ask you if you saw the crew of the brig?"

"I had a good view of them, sir."

"And their captain?"

"As you know, sir, I was not well enough acquainted with Captain Templeton's bearing to recognize him at a distance; but the same man was on board whom others had said, when we chased the brig before, was your son."

"Do not call him son of mine."

"Miss Templeton's brother, then, sir," was the cool reply.

The merchant scowled, but answered:

"And they escaped to the shore?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you may expect to have the brig cut out under your very nose."

"I will see that she is not, sir, for I have need of her for other work, as you know."

Mr. Templeton then went to the iron box, unlocked it, and said:

"Captain Fanchon, you were kind enough to leave for my daughter a rare present, in the shape of a jewel necklace."

"Yes, sir, and I hope she was pleased with it?"

"She has not seen it."

"Indeed?"

"Nor knows that you sent it."

"Ah! was it stolen?"

"No, sir."

"Perhaps you needed a trifle more money, and—"

"No, sir, I would not descend to such an act; but I happen to know the jewel necklace well."

"You don't tell me so, sir?"

"I do indeed, sir, and an explanation from you is in order as to how it came into your possession?"

"As there seems to be lurking in your mind, Mr. Templeton, some suspicion regarding my obtaining the necklace, perhaps I should have told you before regarding it; but I do so now with pleasure."

"I am more than willing to hear, sir."

"As I have told you, Mr. Templeton, mine being an armed merchant craft, I have frequently been called upon by vessels in distress to act as a cruiser."

"On one occasion a merchant vessel, an American, clearing from some Eastern port, was overhauled and captured by a pirate."

"This was several years ago."

"Do you recall her name?"

"Yes, she was a barkatine, and her name was the Gem."

"I am listening, sir."

"One of her crew escaped to the shore by swimming, for it was off the Bahamas, and I was lying in a harbor repairing damages after a storm, and he told me of the affair, and I at once sailed to the place where it had occurred."

"The pirate had sighted the barkatine inshore, where her skipper was at anchor, repairing damages, gotten in the storm I just alluded to, and he ran in on him at night, and captured him."

"When I bore down upon the pirate, he had just scuttled the prize, and had his decks hampered with her cargo, he having set her crew and passengers adrift in boats, to find a port as best they could."

"I caught him at a disadvantage, kept up a hot fire on him, boarded and took him."

"It was a rich haul for me, and among the valuables I found that necklace."

"The pirate schooner I turned over to the British fleet in that cruising-ground, but the cargo I kept as a prize, as I had a right to do, and in fact the vessel too, did I so desire."

"And the passengers of the Gem?"

"A fearful storm sprung up, while they were pulling in the boats for St. Augustine, and though I searched for them, I never found them, so knew not their fate, but surely they never reached the port they headed for."

"They were lost, sir."

"Oh! you knew the Gem then?"

"She was my vessel, sir."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir, and her fate has never been known since she sailed from Boston four years ago."

"I am pained to hear this, for there were ladies on board."

"Yes, sir, my partner, for I had one then, was on the Gem with his young daughter, a lovely girl."

"He was going to New Orleans to establish a branch house, and had taken his daughter, Geraldine her name was, with him."

"Before her departure I presented her with that necklace, in return for a very valuable gift her father had given Lucette, then a mere child."

"The necklace was an heirloom in our family, and I gave it to Geraldine on account of the regard I felt for her father."

"Now it comes to Lucette as a gift from you."

"I trust, sir, that the explanation of how it came into my possession is satisfactory to you?"

"Perfectly, and clears up the mystery of the Gem."

"May I ask if Miss Templeton is aware of the history of the necklace?"

"She knows nothing about it, or of other jewels I have kept to give her on her marriage day."

"I am glad of this, for she might hesitate to wear a jewel she knew had been with one who had lost her life; but keep the trinket for her, among the others you have, and I will give to Miss Templeton another that I have."

"I thank you, I will do so," was the reply of the merchant, who was becoming very

grasping in his dealings with his intended son-in-law.

"Will you dine with us?" he asked.

"With pleasure, if you will permit me to return on board my schooner first, to make my toilet and also to get the trinket I wish to give to Miss Templeton, while I would know regarding Captain Chester's intentions," and Captain Fanchon returned to his schooner.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CHALLENGE.

WHEN Captain Fanchon reached the gangway of his vessel upon the starboard side, he found Captain Lucius Sheldon just coming over the side to port.

They bowed courteously to each other, and Captain Fanchon invited him to enter the cabin.

"I have come, Captain Fanchon, from my friend, Captain Chester," said the merchant commander.

"I have been expecting a visit in behalf of Captain Chester, and am glad he has placed himself in the hands of a gentleman whom I respect as I do you, sir," was the complimentary remark.

Lucius Sheldon bowed, and replied:

"I am requested by my friend, Captain Loyd Chester, to demand of you satisfaction for the insult he received at your hands."

"Certainly, sir, and permit me to say that I regret his insulting manner and language forced me to take cognizance of it on board my own vessel; but that is my only regret."

"Now, sir, I refer you to Mr. Shelley, here, as my friend, and any arrangement you may make with him I will be satisfied with."

"I wish, sir, the matter could be arranged without a hostile meeting."

"Captain Sheldon, if you can see how it can be done, I am willing to meet you half-way; but Captain Chester must retract his language to me, and then—egad! I hardly see how I can take back the wine from his face."

"True, sir; Captain Chester would not accept an apology, I am sure, if offered, and I was wrong to suggest it; but I like you both, and I dislike to see the affair go on."

"Mr. Shelley and you, sir, are at liberty to do as you deem best."

"As for myself, I desire no more notoriety than I already have in the town, for the sake of another, as well as myself."

Lucius Sheldon bowed, and turned to Marvel Shelley, who had sat in silence the while.

"How will swords suit you, Fanchon?" called out Shelley to the captain, who was arranging his toilet in his state-room.

"Swords or pistols are alike to me."

"Give Captain Sheldon the choice of weapons, if you wish," was the indifferent response.

"Swords, then, for if the better swordsman does not care to kill his foe, it can rest there," Sheldon remarked.

"With a reference to pistols, if demanded in the field, after a bout with swords," returned Shelley.

"Yes, and when?"

"When will it suit you, Fanchon?" called Shelley.

"Any time; by the way, say this afternoon, at sunset, in the nearest of the Spectacle Islands."

This was satisfactory to Captain Sheldon, and he departed, while Fanchon, after getting his dueling swords and pistol-case, called Moro to take them, with a crew of four men and a coxswain, in a boat to Spectacle Island.

"And stop at Seaside Temple for me, in ample time to get me there."

"I will go in the boat with Moro, Fanchon, and be there on time for you," said Marvel Shelley, who then said he would remain on board the schooner until time to start.

Then Captain Fanchon took his departure, carrying a small ebony box, handsomely inlaid, under his arm.

Joining the merchant at his office, the two entered the latter's carriage, and were driven rapidly out to Seaside Temple.

Lucette was seated by the open parlor window, running her fingers over her harp-strings, and occasionally singing snatches of some ballad.

She saw the carriage drive up, and changed color as Frank Fanchon followed her father out.

"But yesterday, as it were, I did not care; now I do, for it will be as a living death to marry him now," she murmured.

But she arose, and controlling her emotion, welcomed him in a pleasant way, while he said.

"I fear you are not well, Miss Templeton, for you seem pale."

"Oh, yes, I am perfectly well in body."

"And in mind?"

"My heart aches for my poor brother," she answered in a low tone.

"Ah, yes; but I must tell you that though I captured the brig, all of her crew escaped."

"Thank Heaven! you are very kind," she said, in a voice that was almost inaudible.

"I have taken the liberty of bringing to you a little souvenir, if you will accept it."

"I obtained the trinkets from a Cuban lady who was unable to keep them, as the value was more than she could support."

As he spoke, he opened the inlaid ebony box, displaying a silk velvet cushion, on which reposed a necklace of diamonds, one bracelet of rubies, and another of emeralds.

They were magnificently mounted, matched perfectly in the gold work and size of the stones, only that the one was of diamonds, another of emeralds and the third of rubies.

"Why, Fanchon, those are worth a fortune in themselves," said the delighted merchant.

As for Lucette, she was speechless with amazement, and lost in admiration at their exquisite beauty and value.

"Oh, Captain Fanchon, I cannot accept a gift so priceless," she exclaimed.

"And why not, for are not you alone the one I can give them to?"

"They have been kept by me for some time, with the hope that some day I might marry and thus be able to give them to my lady love."

"They are yours, Miss Templeton, and wear them in remembrance of me."

She bowed her head, to hide the tears in her eyes, and taking the necklace he clasped it about her beautiful neck.

Then upon each well-molded wrist he fastened a bracelet, and bending over kissed her hand.

"They are worth twenty-five thousand, if they are a dollar," exclaimed the merchant, and dinner being announced, Captain Fanchon offered his arm to escort Lucette into the dining-room.

Never before had he appeared so cheerful and entertaining, and the merchant marvelled greatly how a man, who within a few hours' time might be a corpse, could be so seemingly indifferent as to his fate.

After dinner they sat upon the piazza until Captain Fanchon descried a boat coming, and turning his glass upon it, said:

"It is my boat, Miss Templeton, so I must leave you; but, by the way, as it is now but proper to talk business, let me tell you that should aught happen to me at any time, my will leaves you my heiress."

"But why speak of such things, kind as you are to remember me, for there is no reason to dread your being taken off," said Lucette.

"Life is very uncertain to all of us; but the boat is coming into the haven, so I must be off, and with a grasp of her hand, and a bow to the merchant, he walked rapidly down to the shore.

"Father, is not that Mr. Shelley in that boat?" asked Lucette, as it rowed away.

"Yes, it is, indeed, my child."

"And the boat is not going toward the city, but seaward; what does it mean?"

"I may as well tell you, Lucette, that a duel is to be fought at sunset on one of the Spectacle Islands, between Captain Fanchon and Loyd Chester."

"For what reason?" quickly asked Lucette, turning very white.

"Chester will insist that Fanchon is different from what he appears, and says he is, and he insulted him by telling him as much, and the West Indian dashed a glass of wine in his face, and that brought on the meeting; see, yonder goes Chester, to the scene of meeting, in his barge, and Lucius Sheldon is his second."

"Oh, cannot this be averted, father?"

"No, it must take its course!"

"And Captain Fanchon showed no sign of this to me?"

"He is a remarkable man, Lucette, and won my admiration all the time."

"He is indeed a strange man, as brave as he is mysterious, and that is what he meant by telling me that I was his heiress did harm befall him."

"Yes."

"Oh, Heaven avert this meeting," groaned Lucette, and she buried her face in her hands, while the rays of the declining sun cast brilliant reflection upon her neck and arms, from the jewels she wore.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MEETING.

"We will be the first on the field, Shelley," said Captain Fanchon, quietly, as the boat pulled out of the little haven, and he saw the cat-rig craft astern, bringing his adversary.

"And I hope not the last to leave it," was the rather significant answer.

Fanchon smiled and made no reply.

Forward was Moro, the negro, the swords and pistol-case near him, the coxswain sat aft, holding the tiller-ropes, and the four men pulled with a strong, steady stroke at the oars, which sent the boat along at a good rate of speed.

Forward of the coxswain, one on either side, sat Fanchon and Shelley, and the former was smoking.

"There is one thing you forgot, Fanchon."

"Well?"

"A surgeon."

"That is all right, for Chester will doubtless bring the surgeon of his vessel."

"Well, I can request his services for you if needed."

"There will be no need."

"You speak confidently."

"Yes, I always do."

"I spoke to the schooner's surgeon about coming, but he would not do so without orders from you."

"He was right."

Nothing more was said until the boat reached the island, and then the two friends landed, while Moro went ahead with the weapons.

"You can lounge about the island, coxswain, with your men, wait here, or go up and witness the meeting if you wish," said Captain Fanchon quietly.

"We'll go up and see the meeting, sir, thank you," responded the coxswain, and their captain walked on with his second.

"Well, Fanchon, you are engaged to Miss Templeton?" Shelley resumed.

"Yes, I have that honor."

"And should you fall?"

"I shall leave her my heiress."

"With a legacy to me?"

"Certainly, enough to last you until you marry Miss Vancouver."

"If you fall, I shall give up the Vancouver girl."

"Ah?"

"Yes."

"And why?"

"I'll try and take your place in the affections of Miss Templeton."

"You are welcome, if I fall."

"You might."

"Yes, there is a possibility."

"Chester is a crack shot."

"We are to fight with swords, I understand it."

"Yes, and those failing, pistols; but he is considered the best swordsman in the Atlantic fleet."

"The first weapons will not fail," was the calm response.

"By Jove! but you have nerve."

"A man in my calling, Shelley, could not do without it."

"You are right, but you astonish me more and more, as I know you better."

Fanchon laughed, and halted upon the spot which Moro had selected.

"This is a good place, and I will be ready by the time they arrive," said Shelley, and he got the weapons ready for the conflict.

Soon after up came Loyd Chester and Lucius Sheldon arm in arm, and following were the surgeon of the Vicious, a middy and four seamen, the latter carrying their oars.

These ranged themselves near the crew of the other boat, and the surgeon took up his position near, while the middy deposited a pair of swords and a pistol-case by the weapons which Moro had brought.

Fanchon bowed pleasantly, as did Shelley and Lucius Sheldon, but Loyd Chester was as stern as death, and gave a cold nod of recognition.

Sheldon and Marvel Shelley then examined the weapons, and those of Fanchon were selected as the best, they being most superior blades.

Next the swords were handed to them, and both men stood awaiting the word to begin the combat.

Stern and blacker grew the face of the naval officer, while Captain Fanchon was provokingly serene, glancing about him with an indifference that if feigned was remarkable, and particularly winning the admiration of the cutter's boat-crew, while his own men seemed to be in no ways fearful of the result.

Lucius Sheldon won the word, and stepping forward he brought the principals to an attention, and then gave the order to cross swords.

Instantly Chester pressed the attack, and was met with the coolest parries by his enemy.

Angered at not being able to break down his guard by every feint and thrust, Captain Chester fought almost savagely, until it seemed certain that he must find an unguarded point, or destroy his foe's defense by weight of metal alone.

But Fanchon never swerved from his tracks, the quiet, cynical smile never left his lips, and excepting the rapid movements of his blade, he seemed not in the least disturbed.

As the fight progressed, it became plain to all that Fanchon was not acting on the defense from necessity, for he held his adversary at bay without trouble, seemingly.

At length he suddenly moved forward, his defensive attitude turned into the offensive, and he drove the naval officer backward a few steps, and then, with a skill that was superb, sent his sword flying high into the air.

As it came down he cleverly caught it by the blade, and turning to Captain Chester, said pleasantly:

"Permit me to return this sword, sir, with the hope that we may never cross blades again, and request that you accept the pair as a *souvenir* of Frank Fanchon."

There was too much of the man in Loyd Chester's composition to act surly after that, and he held forth his hand frankly and said, with feeling:

"Forgive my unkind suspicions regarding you, Captain Fanchon, and as a *souvenir* of owing to you my life, I accept your princely gift."

"Let us be friends."

"Willingly, sir."

"And what a superb swordsman you are, for I never before met my master, either with the sword or pistol."

"I'll give you a test of my aim too—ho, coxswain!" and Fanchon called out to his coxswain, who stood twenty paces away, talking with the crew of the Vicious.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Have you a golden eagle with you?"

"No, sir."

"Catch this," and he tossed the gold piece to him.

"Hold that up for me," said Fanchon, and the coxswain took the gold between his first finger and thumb, and held it out, hardly more than a foot from his body, as he stood sideways.

In the mean time Moro had hastily loaded one of the long dueling pistols, and handing it to his master, the latter took rapid aim and fired.

The ring of the metal was heard, as the bullet struck the gold, and the coxswain picked it up with a large nick cut in the outer edge.

"Marvelous! and the man deserves great credit for holding it," said Loyd Chester.

"Keep the gold piece, sir, if you like; here, coxswain are a couple in its stead," and Fanchon handed them to the coxswain, who saluted and walked away, while the party moved back toward the boat, for the sun had just sunk behind Dorchester Heights.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE TREASURE SHIP.

As the two boats moved away from the island, there being a head wind, Captain Chester ordered the mast to be struck, and the crew of his boat took to their oars.

Side by side the boats pulled, the occupants, lately so hostile, chatting pleasantly together and commenting upon the beauty of the night and the glimmering lights in the harbor and town.

Soon across their bows in the darkness sailed a small yacht, and a voice hailed:

"Boats ahoy!"

"Ay ay, Mr. Templeton, I recognize your voice," returned Captain Fanchon.

"You are all right then?"

"Ay, ay, sir, never felt better in my life."

"And Captain Chester?"

"Is here, sir."

"Dead?"

"No, indeed, Mr. Templeton, but I owe it to the mercy of Captain Fanchon that I am not, as he disarmed me and spared my life."

"We are friends now."

"Thank God!" came in the voice of Lucette, who was on board the yacht.

"We felt anxious about you both, so sailed out to know the result, for Lucette is with me."

The gentlemen raised their hats in salute, and the yacht being now very near, Lucette asked:

"Will you not all come home and have supper with us?"

"For myself, I must decline, as I have work to do, thank you," returned Loyd Chester.

"And I am compelled to follow Captain Chester's bad example, I regret to say," responded Fanchon, and the boats passed on, to see soon after a brig coming into port, run down near the yacht and hail.

What passed they could not hear, but soon after, on the starboard tack, the brig passed close astern of the boats and her skipper hailed:

"Boats ahoy!"

"Ay, ay!" answered Loyd Chester.

"Are those Government boats?"

"This one is; how can I serve you?"

"They told me on the yacht that you belonged to the harbor cruiser?"

"Ay, ay, sir, I am her commander."

"I am bearing about a hundred thousand in gold, with a valuable cargo besides, shipped to a Boston bank and commercial house, and I have been chased from off Montauk by a pirate schooner that would have caught me but for my brig being very fast."

"Ay, ay! I will run in and give chase at once, and, Captain Fanchon, I will ask you to go in the Restless and aid me," said Loyd Chester.

"Willingly, sir."

"As I cannot unload to-night, where can I anchor, sir, in-shore until morning?"

"He had better run in and anchor off Templeton's wharf," said Lucius Sheldon.

"Yes, it is the best place," and he gave directions accordingly, and, as the wind was now fresh, and the brig making rapid time, ropes were thrown out and the boats were taken in tow.

"Describe the pirate, skipper," said Loyd Chester, as they went skimming along in the wake of the brig.

"He's a small schooner, with masts that have a bow forward, rather than a rake aft, but it don't hinder his sailing, for I never saw a craft before hold the White Wings as he did, and he is that sharp and low in the water that in rough water we could only see his sticks and canvas, while his decks were too much washed to permit him to use his guns."

"It's the same craft we have heard of on a number of occasions," said Captain Chester.

"He's a flyer, and in easy weather could sneak on to us, I guess."

"You certainly have a fast craft, captain."

"She is, sir; but she's not mine, for she was built as a present to a young navy officer who lives down in Maine."

"His uncle is a New York merchant, and thinking there is to be war with England, had her built as a privateer, and then sent me with the gold and her cargo to this port, after which I am to take her to Portland, where she is to be armed with the guns taken

from a cruiser that went on a rock, and stayed there."

"Yes, it was the Dolphin; she struck in a fog, and she had a superb armament on board; but who is the naval officer, skipper?"

"Lieutenant Dudley Burr, sir."

"Ah! the same who was Mr. Templeton's guest, for that was his name."

"He only left a few days ago, and can hardly know of his uncle's gift to him," said Fanchon.

"No, sir, he does not know it yet," said the skipper.

The brig was now not very far from her anchorage, and the boats were cast loose, and headed for their respective vessels.

"You will soon be under way, Captain Fanchon?" asked Captain Chester.

"Yes, within fifteen minutes after I reach my deck."

"And I will follow as soon as possible in Sheldon's brig, and we had best wait in the vicinity of Telegraph Hill."

"It would be better to do so, Captain Chester, and then we can decide what is best to be done to capture this pirate."

"Yes, we must take him," called back Loyd Chester, and under the strong strokes of their crews the boats sped on their way.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

By the time that Captain Fanchon got the Restless under way, the armed brig was seen coming down from her anchorage, and under lower sails only the schooner held along even with the other vessel with her topsails set.

It was a fair run out, with the wind over the starboard beam, and the moon arose by the time that they had reached Lovell's Island.

An incoming coaster reported having seen a small schooner cruising along to the southwest under mainsail and jib only, while a pilot-boat reported an armed schooner to the northward of Green Island.

"I will stand to the southward, Fanchon, leaving the craft in the vicinity of Green Island to you, for it is doubtless the pirate, and the Restless could catch her while I cannot in this vessel."

"If the other proves to be the pirate I'll signal you with rockets, so keep a lookout for them, and you signal me likewise if your game is the one we want," called out Loyd Chester from the deck of his vessel.

"Ay, ay, Captain Chester, and I will crowd on canvas to come to you if I get your signals."

"Luck to you," and the two vessels parted, the Restless now setting full sail, and standing up well under the pressure of the twelve-knot breeze, while she drove through the water at a magnificent pace.

A run of an hour brought her in the vicinity of Gem Island, and soon after from the mast-head came the cry:

"Schooner ho!"

"Whereaway, my man?"

"Under the lee of the island, sir, and lying to under bare poles, or at anchor."

"Ay, ay, we will run down toward her."

"You carry three lights, Fanchon," said Marvel Shelley, who had accompanied his friend upon his cruise, and he pointed to the two colored side-lights, and a third at the fore-cross-trees, and which was a very brilliant color.

"Oh, yes, it is a notion of mine, for I do not care to be run down through not being seen at night."

"But yonder craft will see you."

"He has ere this, and does not run, so perhaps he expects to capture us."

"It may be, but he's a plucky fellow to lie in wait there for you, not knowing what you are."

"He may feel confident in his strength, but I judge he is one of those Baltimore schooners, out of Portland, and not the pirate."

As the Restless drew nearer, the strange schooner still remained quiet, and running down within a few cables' length, Fanchon ordered his helmsman to lay the vessel to, at the same time telling a young officer to lower away a boat.

"Will you board without hailing?"

"Certainly, Shelley, for I have no fear of him," and he rowed away in the boat directly for the stranger.

Marvel Shelley saw him board, waited some little time, and then beheld the boat coming back.

"Well?" he asked eagerly, as Fanchon stepped on board the Restless.

"As I supposed, it is a Baltimore trading schooner, and he's fishing for an anchor he lost last voyage, when he ran under the lee of the island to ride out a blow."

"Then Chester will catch the pirate."

"The other schooner is doubtless the pirate; but whether Captain Chester will capture him is another thing."

"I will, however, stand after him to see if I can be of service."

As the schooner headed southeast the lookout cried:

"Sail ho!"

"I see her, and it is a brig coming out of Boston harbor, and bound eastward," said Fanchon.

"By Jove!" but it looks to me like the craft that towed us in," Marvel Shelley remarked.

"Yes, she does look like her, but that brig is safe off Templeton's wharf."

"Oh, yes! But there is a striking resemblance even to my landsman's eye."

"There is, indeed!" was the reply, and then the subject of the brig was dropped, as the schooner held on her way.

It was nearly dawn when Captain Chester's vessel was sighted, and when hailed, he said he had seen nothing of the schooner.

Captain Fanchon told then about having boarded the Baltimore schooner, and also having sighted a brig bound east.

"She looked so much like the White Wings, that towed us in, Shelley wanted me to give chase; but then I did not see how it could be that craft, and I held on to find you, thinking you would need me, as my craft proved not to be the pirate."

"I almost wish you had overhauled the brig, after the mysterious piracies we have had in the harbor; but then it could not have been the White Wings, as you say."

"Now I'll cruise about Cape Cod, if you will run down as far as Nantucket, and see if the daylight reveals our game."

Again the vessels parted, and the moon was just rising the following night when they met once more in the main ship channel running into Massachusetts Bay.

"Anything to report, Fanchon?" called out Captain Chester.

"Nothing, sir; have you?"

"Not a word," and they stood on up to their anchorages, when they were greeted with the startling intelligence that not an hour after their departure the strange brig White Wings had been boarded and carried out to sea.

Two of her crew had escaped, and they reported that a boat full of men had come near, and in answer to the hail of their captain, an officer had replied that Captain Chester of the brig-of-war Vicious, had sent him on board as a guard, as it was feared an attempt would be made to cut out the treasure craft.

The captain had welcomed them aboard, and instantly he and most of his crew had been seized; while he and his comrade had hidden, and slipped overboard as the vessel was passing Spectacle Islands, from whence they were taken the next day by a passing sloop.

"If he so desired now, Chester could not suspect you this time, Captain Fanchon," said Marvel Shelley with a laugh.

"The captain has my sympathy, hampered as he is with a disabled cruiser, a small crew, and allowed no patrol boats to guard the harbor."

"I suppose, after this, he will get what he has demanded from the Government as his just due," returned Captain Fanchon quietly.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CAPTURED BY PIRATES.

A LARGE vessel is sailing swiftly along over the moonlit waters of the Atlantic, and all about her, from rig to hull, indicates that she has been prepared for a long cruise to another land.

She is a trim craft, with a full complement of men forward upon her decks, to do her Skippers bidding, and aft are a number of passengers, a dozen or more, and among them was an elderly man, upon whose arm,

as they promenaded the deck, clung a young and graceful girl.

Her face was most attractive, with large, dark honest eyes, very expressive and her appearance that of one who had been reared amid refined surroundings.

She was dressed in mourning, and her companion also wore a band of crape upon his hat.

Another of the passengers was a young man whose appearance attracted universal attention, for his was a face to see and remember, and his athletic form had a strikingly distinguished bearing.

He was dressed as a civilian, though there was that about him that smacked of salt water.

In his eyes dwelt a look of sadness, and now and then, when he would stand and gaze out over the waters, he would be seen by those watching his face to bite his lips, contract his brows painfully and seem to shrink under some mental suffering.

He had observed the maiden and her male companion, and they also had been attracted to him in their days together upon the vessel, and the old gentleman had tried to draw the younger one out, to make him forget whatever he brooded upon, but though courteous in the extreme, he had kept to himself whenever allowed to do so.

Upon the night when they are introduced to the reader, standing upon the vessel's deck, as she sails swiftly along over the moon-lighted sea, the young man is leaning over the taffrail, gazing down into the silvery wake, and lost in painful reverie.

Suddenly he glances up, his eyes falling out upon the waters astern, and clear as a bugle note, and startling, came his cry:

"Sail ho! sail ho!"

"Whereaway?" cried the hardy old skipper, springing to his feet from an easy-chair, where he had been seated conversing with the gentleman and his pretty daughter.

"Dead astern, sir, and she's an armed schooner, and in chase," was the terse reply.

"By Neptune! but you are right, young sir, and she has been creeping up on us unseen."

"Ho, there, forward! all hands ahoy to make sail!" shouted the skipper, and the crew were sent flying aloft.

"Lively there, you blind sea-dogs, not to see that schooner."

"Mr. Bruce, send those lookouts below for punishment, for their eyes must be opened," and turning to the young man, he continued in a low tone:

"You've got a sailor's voice, sir, and an eye, too."

"What might be your name, for I've not heard it though you have been my passenger for some time."

"My name is Trevor, sir, Tom Trevor."

"Ah! I remember now, it is on the ship's books."

"Well, Mr. Trevor, I am glad to know you."

"You are a sailor?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have trod the quarter-deck, I'll wager?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now I'll hand you back your passage-money if you'll act as mate for me, for my first officer is on the sick list."

"I'll aid you with pleasure, sir, and be glad of something to do."

"Thank you!"

"Now what do you make of that schooner astern?"

"Either an American cruiser, sir, or—"

"Or what?"

"A pirate."

"You hit my thoughts; but if the latter?"

"We have to fight for it."

"You are my style, Mr. Trevor, and we'll do it."

"What number of crew have you, sir?"

"Thirty, all told, from skipper to cabin-boy."

"And nine male passengers."

"Yes, making thirty-nine."

"Not a bad showing; but your guns are small, so, if he is a pirate, you will have to make up by trickery what you lack in strength."

"What can we do?"

"If you see he is a pirate, pretend to surrender, let him run alongside, and then give him the full weight of your guns."

"Well said, sir, and we'll do it; but he comes on well."

"He does indeed, sir, so you had better prepare for him."

"You take the deck, Mr. Trevor, and I'll get my fighters together," and the captain went forward, while the crew and passengers were startled to suddenly hear the ringing voice of the young passenger issuing orders.

The seamen recognized instantly their master, that they had no land-lubber to deal with, and they sprung to work with a will.

The ship was now put under every stitch of canvas that would draw, and went along at a tremendous pace, for the breeze was fresh.

But the little schooner astern came along with all canvas set, and gained steadily.

"Well, all is ready, Mr. Trevor, for a fight, if it must come to it," said the captain, coming back and joining his newly appointed mate.

"We will have to fight, sir, I am certain, for that schooner is a pirate without doubt, for her bows forward are crowded with men."

"Take this glass and see."

"A splendid glass you have, Mr. Trevor, and it shows me just what that fellow is, for that gang forward are buccancers."

"Yes, sir."

"I'll go into the cabin and get my belt of arms, and look you up some weapons, too."

"Thank you, I have my own in my kit; but you had best call the male passengers aside, and explain matters as you deem them to be."

"Right you are, sir, and I will do it" and the skipper went about giving a sign to the male passengers to follow him below.

"Oh, sir, is that schooner a pirate?" and the young girl came up to where Tom Trevor stood and laid her hand gently upon his arm.

"It is not certain, lady, yet; but we will be able to beat him off should it be," he responded.

"Ah me! I fear not, sir, for they are such desperate men, and merciless."

"We can but try, lady," he answered, and, as he spoke there came a flash from the schooner's bows, and a solid shot came shrieking over the deck of the ship.

"Go below, lady, please, and take the others with you," said the young sailor, while out of the cabin came the old skipper, the passengers at his heels, alarmed by the shot.

"No, I will not shrink from a danger that those who defend us must meet," was the reply.

"Still, lady, your presence on deck would but unnerve the men, so I pray you go below."

"Yes, Eulalie, you must go into the cabin," said the elderly gentleman.

"And you, father?"

"Will aid in the defense of the ship—ha! there comes another shot," and the gentleman drew his daughter down the companion-way.

"And well aimed," coolly said the new mate, as the shot tore its way right above the deck.

"Yes, he is in earnest; but we will hold on as long as we can," the skipper replied.

But, as he spoke a third shot came, and then in rapid succession they followed, cutting the sails, splintering spars and masts, and wounding several of the crew.

Luffing sharp the schooner fired a telling broadside, and the skipper gave the order to lay the ship to.

It was quickly done, and the schooner bore down, with evident intention to board.

"He will come up under the ship's stern, sir, and he evidently does not believe we have a gun, so we will double-shot them with canister, and fire our muskets and pistols too, at the moment of boarding, and, then we can hurl the guns over on his deck and perhaps sink him."

"Your plot is a good one, Mr. Trevor, and if we beat him off, yours is the credit," said the skipper, and the arrangements were quickly made, the light cannon being brought aft by the main strength of the crew.

A few minutes more, and, with sails flut-

tering, her bows swarming with men, the schooner came up under the ship's stern.

"What ship's that?" hailed a gruff voice.

"The Vermont! What schooner's that?" returned the skipper.

"The corsair schooner Gold Hunter, and you are our game."

"Throw us a line!"

"Steady, all!" said Tom Trevor in a low tone, which was caught by the pirates.

"Fire!"

Like a trumpet rung the voice of the young mate, and the gun-muzzles were depressed, the discharges followed, musketry rattled, and wild shrieks, groans and oaths came from the schooner's deck.

"Fire again, lads!" came the order, and once more the guns and muskets flashed and roared; but a giant form had sprung forward and severed the line with his cutlass, and the bows of the schooner swung off, just as the heavy guns were hurled over the stern of the ship.

Had they fallen upon the sharp bows of the schooner, they would have torn them off; but with a loud plunge they went into the sea.

"Run for it!" cried the young mate; but as he spoke the pirates opened fire, for accustomed to scenes of carnage, they soon regained their pluck.

Then about the gallant ship sailed the little schooner, pouring broadside after broadside upon her, until her decks were covered with the dead and wounded, and daubed with blood.

Loud rung out the cries of her crew for mercy, and at last the carnage ceased, and the pirates boarding met with no opposition.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ADRIFT UPON THE OCEAN.

It was a small, pitiful group of passengers that met the eyes of the pirate leader, as he sprung upon the ship's deck, while those of the crew who had not been slain or wounded, stood together not far distant, their commander lying dead before them.

"Who commands this vessel?" cried the pirate, a tall man with a long black beard.

"There lies her captain," said Tom Trevor, pointing to the dead skipper.

"Fool! did he think to beat off a vessel of the Corsair King's League?"

"Well, he has met his fate, so let it end."

"You are passengers, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," answered the young man, assuming the part of spokesman, while Eulalie Langdon and her father stood just behind him.

"Methinks I saw you with cutlass in hand and issuing orders, young sir?"

"You did, sir, for I am not so craven as not to aid in defending a vessel on which I am a passenger," was the bold reply.

"You are plucky at least, and you can go with the others, unless you serve with me."

"Not to save my life, sir."

"Ah! your speech rings; but I'll let you go."

"Your vessel is my prize, and when I have sacked her, I will set her afire."

"As for the seamen, they must join my crew in place of those you killed."

Against this decision there was no alternative, and Trevor asked:

"What will you do with the passengers, Sir Pirate?"

"How many are they?"

"Counting all, eleven, for several were killed."

"Very well, I'll put you all in the ship's long boat and set you adrift."

"Without food or water?"

"No, you shall have both, and if you cannot reach land it is your fault, not mine," was the brutal response.

"These women and children will die, through your brutal treatment."

"I care not, for into the boat you go."

Pleading was in vain, and half an hour after the passengers, several of whom were wounded, were lowered into the long boat.

Some provisions had been thrown in, oars, a short mast and sails, with a little bedding, and the boat was cast off.

Once free of the vessel, Trevor was as cheerful as though they were in great luck, and an awning was spread to protect the women and children forward, and everything done to make them comfortable.

The water and provisions were moved aft,

the mast was stepped and sail set, and a canvas curtain was strung across the boat amidships, giving the women and children a compartment to themselves.

The boat was roomy, and stanch, and went along well under her small sail, while Trevor, the only sailor on board, headed for the land which was hundreds of miles away.

Several hours after they had left the ship, they beheld the bright flames climbing up the rigging of the gallant craft, and saw the pirate schooner sailing away to go on another cruise of death.

Daylight came and the heat was intense; but the long boat held on its way, guided by the unerring hand upon her helm, and thus passed the long hours away.

Night fell, and with it came a storm, and then the poor unfortunates suffered terribly in their cramped quarters.

But skillfully through the dangers Trevor guided the boat, and another day came.

Thus the days and nights came and went, the provisions getting less and less, the water almost gone, and the land yet a long way off, the young sailor was forced to admit.

Hunger and thirst made the poor wretched men desperate; but Trevor soothed them all he could, and daily stole forward and gave the women and children food.

The wounded men died, and were thrown overboard, and then the water and food was gone, so the young sailor said.

But he watched those who suffered most, and would sneak into their hands a mouthful of food or swallow of water from a flask, for, had they known he had any left it would instantly have been devoured.

Mr. Langdon seemed to be wasting away, and his daughter hung over him constantly, while each night, under cover of the darkness, he was fed, and she was, by the young sailor, who starved himself for their sake, as his sunken eyes, haggard cheeks and trembling hands showed.

"I am going to join your angel mother, Eulalie," said Mr. Langdon one dark, raging night.

"You will live, and you will reach your aunt, and live a long and happy life; but I must go for I am dying of starvation."

"If I had food I could live, I know."

Then to his side came Trevor, his hat half full of fresh rain water, and he gave the suffering man a good draught, and also handed to Eulalie a handful of soaked crackers.

Eagerly they partook of the food, while the maiden said:

"And yours?"

"I am strong; I do not need it," he said.

But she knew he told a falsehood, and she said:

"You need it more than we, for you do all the work."

"I have plenty; I will eat by-and-by," he answered, and he sneaked back to his post at the tiller.

Morning dawned and Eulalie saw that three more of their number must find a grave in the sea.

Thus it went on, she and her father liberally fed by night, and others stintingly so, and fasting and suffering by day.

At last not a drop of water, not a cracker remained, and the end must come.

"Sail ho!" shrieked Trevor in a voice that went far over the waters.

It roused the dying ones, and then over the waters they beheld a vessel coming toward them.

"Sail ho!" again cried the young sailor, and, with a groan his hand fell from the tiller and he sunk into the bottom of the boat.

"Oh, God! he is dead! he who has saved us all," cried Eulalie.

"No, he is not dead; but the thread of life hangs by a slender thread," said her father.

Soon the good craft came near, and they were taken on board, more dead than alive.

But kind hands administered to their wants, and several days after they were landed at St. Augustine, Florida.

It was, strange to say, the point of destination of Mr. Langdon and his daughter, and to the home of Eulalie's widowed aunt, who had sent for her to be as her daughter to her, now that her mother was dead, Trevor was taken, still hovering between life and death.

Days passed away and Mr. Langdon and Eulalie regained their former health, and ten-

derly watched over the sick sailor, for they knew all that they owed to him, that he had worked day and night to save them, and had given to them his share of food.

At last he rallied, for his was an iron constitution, and he opened his eyes one day and reason shone in them.

"Oh, I am so glad!" said Eulalie, who was seated near, sewing.

"Miss Langdon," he said in a faint voice.

"Yes."

"Where am I?"

"You are in my house, in St. Augustine, Florida, for, upon the death of my mother my father brought me here to live with my aunt, who is just the dearest woman in the world."

"And your father?"

"Has returned to his business in Baltimore."

"I have been very ill."

"Yes."

"How long?"

"Weeks; but you must not talk, for you are getting well."

"I wish to recall what has happened."

"Don't worry, and I will tell you all."

"We were attacked by pirates, and in spite of your courage we were captured, set adrift, and for days owed our lives to you."

"You starved yourself, gave father and myself your share of food, and, when you sighted the vessel that picked us up you became ill and delirious, and we brought you here, and here you are to remain as long as you please."

"Now keep quiet and I'll give you something to eat and bring my aunt in to see you."

A few more weeks and the young sailor was himself again; but there seemed upon his life a deep shadow that he could not shake off, and one day he said to himself:

"Yes, I will tell her all and then go far away from here, to become a wanderer once more."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SAILOR'S SECRET.

THE home of the widow Ronald, for such was the name of Eulalie Langdon's aunt, was one of the most delightful residences in the delightful old town of St. Augustine.

Mrs. Ronald had been a Northern girl, but had married a Southern man, a sea captain, who had taken her to St. Augustine to live.

With no children of her own, and a widow, when she heard of the death of her sister, she had at once written to have Eulalie come to her, and it was Mr. Langdon's intention, as soon as he could close up his business affairs in Baltimore to return to the far South to end his days in calm repose.

It was to this lovely home that Tom Trevor had been taken, and, as he grew in strength and health, Eulalie was his constant companion among the orange groves and flower-gardens.

One day, some two months after his arrival in the home of Mrs. Ronald, Trevor was exceedingly blue, and he walked about the yard, his face full of gloom.

Strolling down into the town near the beach, he came upon a party of drunken sailors worrying an old Indian and his son, the latter a boy of seventeen.

Instantly he spoke to the sailors in a tone of authority and ordered them to desist.

There was something about the young sailor that cowed them, and they obeyed, and he walked on his way.

As he returned, he saw them set upon the two Indians, who were trying to reach their boat, and begin to beat them unmercifully.

Rushing upon the scene, he dealt blows that sent the drunken seamen to earth, and standing before the two Indians, both of whom were hurt, he threatened to kill the man that touched them again, and he thrust his hand into the breast of his coat.

The men had felt the weight of his hand, and they retreated, while he led the Indians with him to the tavern, paid for a good room for them and sent for a doctor, who soon bound up their wounds.

"Remain here until you are well, for it will cost you nothing," he said to the Indians, who he saw were no ordinary men of the tribe.

"I am Soto, the Seminole chief."

"This is Iron Face, my son."

"We both thank our pale-face friend," said the old chief, and the youth added:

"Chief Soto and Iron Face do not forget their friends."

Feeling better after his good deed, Trevor went on his way back to the mansion, and, as he saw Eulalie seated in an arbor, he said:

"I must tell her, and now, for it is torture to live as I do."

Going toward the maiden she greeted him with a smile, and motioned him to a seat beside her.

"Eulalie, I have something to say to you," he said softly.

"And I am willing to hear it, Mr. Trevor."

"Will you forgive me beforehand for what I am going to say?"

"Rather a strange request, is it not?" and she smiled archly.

"No, for I will need your forgiveness."

"I will do so, Mr. Trevor," she said, touched by his manner.

"Eulalie, had I not overheard something last night, I would not now tell you what I do; but do you remember I dropped to sleep in the hammock?"

"Yes," she said, softly.

"You forgot that I was there, and you came out upon the piazza with your aunt, and I heard all that you told her."

The maiden's face turned crimson, and she buried it in her hands and burst into tears.

"I was awakened by the sound of your voice, and I dared not betray myself after I heard your words."

"I heard you tell your aunt, Eulalie, that you loved me."

"I heard you tell her that you would not let me go from you, as I had said I must do; but, if I did not love you, you would teach me to do so."

"Ah, Mr. Trevor!"

"Eulalie, you do not have to teach me, for I do love you—yes, above all the world I love you, and yet I must go from you."

She had sprung to her feet, a look of joy upon her beautiful face; but at his latter words she turned pale and said:

"You love me, and yet, must go from me?"

"Yes, Eulalie, and I will tell you why."

"Why—oh, why?" she cried, excitedly.

"Listen to my story, Eulalie, for it seems I did not betray it in my delirium."

"No, you kept your lips sealed even in your wildest delirium."

"Eulalie, I am a married man!"

She groaned and sunk down upon the settee.

"Listen, Eulalie, while I tell you all."

"I am a sailor, and my family are among the proudest in the land; but yet I wedded a poor little fisher-girl."

"It was in this way, Eulalie:

"My vessel was caught one day, repairing damages, off a most dangerous coast, and a storm was coming on, and we would have been dashed to wreck and death upon the rocks, had not a pilot come out to us."

"That pilot was a young girl, and she saved the vessel then, while at night she actually swam out to the brig in the face of a storm that was about to break, and warned me of a plot she had overheard of coast-wreckers to seize my vessel, and thus again she saved me."

"She was very pretty, possessed a pure character and a noble heart, and was loved by all the young fishermen near."

"I offered her gold for her valuable services, but she indignantly refused money, and, on my next voyage I took her many handsome presents."

"Do not think me vain, Eulalie, if I tell you that I saw that sweet Bessie loved me, so I determined to visit her no more, and passed her home without doing so on two voyages."

"Upon another occasion we were becalmed near her cabin on the shore, and I saw a boat putting out to my vessel."

"It contained her father, and he told me I had broken Bessie's heart by passing her by, for she had seen my vessel each time, and recognized it, and he begged me to come ashore and see her, for she was dying."

"Instantly I went, and I found her almost a wreck of her former self."

"She threw her arms about my neck, and

told me that she loved me, and she begged me to make her my wife for the short time she had to live, and make her last days happy.

"Humor the poor child, sir, for it's little hindrance she'll be to you in a few more weeks," urged her mother, and her father pleaded, too.

"So I yielded, Eulalie; a clergyman was sent for, and I married poor Bessie, though I did not love her.

"I allowed my vessel to go on to port without me, telling the mate to stop upon his return, and I tenderly cared for her.

"Oh, Eulalie! you should have seen the sunshine come back into that poor child's life, and instantly she began to improve.

"When my vessel got back, in three weeks, she was almost well, and the shadow of death passed from over her young head.

"That was years ago, Eulalie, and, though I did all I could to make her happy, I never loved her, and I sacrificed myself for her.

"It has been six months since I have seen her, and then I told her that I was going on a long voyage.

"I little knew then how long it would be, or what I would pass through.

"Now, Eulalie, you know my secret, and you know that I must go from you."

"But, whither?" she asked in a quivering voice.

"I know not; I care not; only I must go."

"Not now," she pleaded.

"In a very few days, and we may never meet again."

"And that woman—your wife?"

"Should she die, Eulalie, and I be free, then I will come back here to see if your love has been true."

"Unto death will it be," was her fervent response, and she sprang into his arms.

One long embrace, a kiss, and those two had buried the love they dared not cherish.

Several days after Tom Trevor bade farewell to Mrs. Roland and to Eulalie, and with his little bundle of baggage at his back, all he had in the world, though he had some money he had hidden away from the pirates when the ship was taken, he walked down to the shore to take passage upon a vessel running to New Orleans.

As he reached the shore he came face to face with the two Seminole Indians.

"Ugh! Soto glad to see his friend.

"Going away?" asked the chief.

"Yes, chief, I am trying to hide from myself, and care not where I go," was the reckless response.

"Go with me and Iron Face."

"Where?"

"Our camp, our people; we have good wing-boat, see!" and he pointed to a large sea canoe, a bateau, carrying two masts, and decked over forward.

"By the cross of my religion! but I will go with you, chief," was the sudden response of the young sailor, and he pitched his bundle into the canoe.

"Soto is glad."

"And Iron Face is glad; like white chief much," said the Indians.

"When do you start?"

"Now; any time."

"Wait for me," and going back up into the town, Trevor made a number of purchases, such as he felt would please his red-skin friends, and with slaves bearing his packages he returned to the shore.

"Here, chief, I am going to stay, you see," he said with a reckless laugh, and the bundles were put on board.

Then the red-skins and their white friend sprang on board, the canoe was cut loose, and went skimming along over the waters of the harbor at a speed that surprised the young sailor.

Once out of the harbor the canoe danced over the waves of the Atlantic, its sharp prows turned down the coast toward the spot where dwelt the people of Soto the Seminole.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM.

It is sunset upon the Florida coast, and with the going down of the sun every particle of wind has died away.

Not a ripple disturbs the glassy surface of

the waters, and the swell rolls landward with a lazy motion, and falls with deep-moaning sound upon the white beach.

Out upon the waters, a mile off-shore, lies a vessel becalmed.

As night comes on, and no sign of a breeze is visible, the rattling of the iron cable shows that an anchor has been let fall to hold her from drifting upon the shore.

It is a schooner, which at a first glance might be mistaken for a vessel-of-war, for her battery of guns is in perfect condition, her deck is clean and white, every rope is in its place, and there is the appearance of thorough discipline on board.

But a glance at the crew, and one would see that they are not honest tars.

They are a hard lot, dressed in red and blue striped shirts, white pants, and black knit skull-caps, upon the front of which is embroidered in white a skull and cross bones, emblematical of their calling of buccaneers.

About their waists are belts, containing a long knife and pistol, and upon their feet are low slippers.

Their faces indicate a dozen different nationalities, and more villainous countenances could not be found among the lost souls in Hades.

There are racks of arms, from cutlasses and pistols, to boarding-pikes and muskets, and stands of solid shot and canister are about each gun, of which latter there are two large pivots, one fore, the other aft, and four small brass howitzers to a broadside.

Aft a huge man, dressed very much like his crew, only that he wears shoulder-straps and a sword, and his black cap has a gold tassel, reclines in a hammock stretched across the quarter-deck.

His face is bearded, his hair worn long, and he looks the villain he is.

Two others, who are also officers, for their cap tassels are silver, are seated upon the deck near, playing cards, and a negro lies asleep by the port bulwark.

The men are scattered from the waist to the fore-castle, and some fifty in number, are engaged in gambling, chatting, smoking or sleeping.

There are marks upon the schooner, her spars and masts, with patches in her sails, that show she has been in hot action; but she has the look of a craft that is stanch, fleet, and a dangerous foe.

Upon one side of her, and a mile away, stretch the almost boundless Everglades of Florida, their dark-green foliage presenting a striking contrast to the blue of the ocean, which seems indeed expanseless on the other hand.

With no wind to waft her on her way, the saucy craft, at whose peak listlessly hangs the black flag of the corsair, must lie idle upon the waters.

As night comes on, the heavens darken, the stars are shut out from view, and a drizzling rain begins to fall which drives all but the officer of the deck and the watch below, glad to escape to shelter.

There is still not a breath of wind, and the officer seeks shelter on the lee of the high bulwark, where, seated upon a gun-carriage he draws his storm cloak about him and half sleeps away the time.

Forward the watch of half a dozen men are sheltering themselves beneath the fore-castle, and a sail spread out to protect them from the gently falling rain.

The night is so dark, that the darkness seems tangible, and only a light streaming from the cabin stern-port relieves the blackness of the scene.

On the shore, early in the afternoon a man had stood, leaning upon a long rifle and watching the slowly moving schooner, as she cruised along the coast.

He carried in a pouch a small spy-glass and, as the calm fell upon the sea, and the schooner remained stationary, he turned it upon the vessel.

For a long while he looked, and then he said aloud:

"No, I am not mistaken, for yonder craft is the one I have reason to remember.

"Ah! he drops anchor to keep from drifting, and now I will examine the vessel well."

Standing in the shadow of a tree he again bent his glass upon the schooner.

He is a man clad in moccasins, and wears a fancy gilt embroidered cap.

His face is bronzed, and yet, in spite of his

garb, the face of Tom Trevor, the young sailor is recognizable.

His rifle is a serviceable weapon, as a string of game at his feet testifies, and he carries a knife and pistol in his belt.

Having passed half an hour looking at the schooner, he throws his rifle across his shoulder, picks up his string of game, and strides rapidly away into the forest.

Soon he comes to the water, a large expanse, evidently an arm of the sea, or inland.

Moored to the shore is a canoe, with a sail, and springing into it, he furls the canvas, as there is no wind, and seizing a broad-bladed paddle, sends the light barque swiftly over the waters.

For several miles he holds on his way, and then runs into a small cove, the shores of which rise to a height of ten feet or more above the surrounding country.

A fine natural park of gigantic trees runs back from the shore, and scattered about in it are several hundred rude habitations, the *tepees* of the Indians.

Fully a thousand dusky dwellers of the forest are seen among the trees, the women engaged in cooking the evening meal, the children playing about here and there, and the warriors sitting about in groups.

In the upper part of the village are several *tepees* larger than the others, and before one of these sits Soto the Seminole chief.

His eye takes in the village of his people, the squaws at work, the children at play, the braves idling, and the sandy beach upon which are drawn up a hundred or more crafts, from the small bark canoe, to the large bateau with three sails.

"My white brother is welcome.

"He has killed game," said Chief Soto, as Trevor passed through the village and approached his *tepee*.

"Yes, chief, we have a good supper here, and there are fish in my canoe; but I have come to tell you that I wish to go upon a trail to-night, and I need half a hundred of your bravest warriors."

"Ah! have the pale-faces broken their word, and do they come to burn my village and kill my people?" cried the old chief.

"Oh, no, chief; but the winged boat of wicked robber pale-faces lies off the shore.

"They are the same who nearly took my life, as I have told you, and there is no wind to fill their sails, so I wish to go and capture them.

"In the darkness of night we can go in our light canoes and board the vessel, and I will enrich you and your tribe with booty.

"Will you let your braves go?"

"My white brother is chief here, second only to me, so let him command his red braves, and they will obey."

"I thank you, chief, and I would have the Iron Face go."

"Oh, yes, the son of Soto must be a great brave."

"I will find him and then we will pick our braves, for I want the sailors of the tribe."

"There are many of my braves who have sailed far away in big winged boats."

"I know it, chief, and they are the ones I wish, for I have work for them to do."

So saying, Trevor went through the village in search of the young warrior Iron Face, and finding him, the two picked out the braves they needed for the night's work, and, before sunset a dozen canoes were assembled upon the village shore, and to man them were four-score braves, armed and in full war-paint, for they knew that blood was to be shed, and they had perfect trust in their young white chief, for well they knew how he had saved Soto and his son Iron Face from death.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LALLAH'S LOVE.

THE wigwam, or *tepee*, of Trevor was not far from the chief's camp, and thither the young sailor went, to prepare himself for the expedition upon which he intended starting.

He knew well its dangers, he was aware that he was undertaking a desperate thing, to attempt the seizure of an armed vessel, a pirate vessel at that, with a crew of red-skins.

In his *tepee*, which was by far the most comfortable one in the village, he had a

table, and upon it was writing materials and a few books.

The walls of the tepee were hung with various souvenirs, presented him by Indian maidens, the floor was carpeted with dressed furs, and his bed consisted of a hammock, cleverly swung on one side of the lodge.

A rustic frame upheld a rifle, musket, several swords and knives, a belt of pistols and some ammunition flasks and pouches.

Taking up a quill pen he dipped it into an ink-horn that hung against the lodge-pole, and wrote several pages, which he folded and sealed, placing it under a book on his table.

Then, as he finished, a red face peered in under the skin curtains.

"Well, Cheo?" said Tom Trevor, recognizing an Indian urchin, a nephew of Soto, the chief.

"White Chief know big pine on Wild Flower Point?" said the red-skin boy.

"Yes."

"Lallah there, and wants to see white chief."

"I will go," was the reply, and soon after Trevor left the tepee.

He wended his way through the village, and turned into a dense forest.

A walk of a quarter of a mile brought him to a narrow point of land that jutted out between two lakes, and which seemed to be a perfect garden of wild flowers.

Walking along a path that led toward the point, Trevor soon came to the rendezvous to which Cheo had directed him.

A huge pine grew on the point, and it was the favorite trysting-place of Indian lovers.

A canoe was upon the shore near, and standing by the tree was a young Indian girl.

Her face was well featured, her eyes very bright and full of tenderness, and her lips were rosy, her teeth perfect.

Her hair was black as ink, intertwined with beads and small sea-shells, and she was dressed with a grace and elegance that was uncommon among Indians.

She wore a bodice and skirt of buckskin, leggings of the same, and moccasins, all beaded and worked with artistic skill.

About her neck were strings of beads, necklaces of rare pebbles, and bracelets of the same were upon her wrists.

At her back was a quiver of arrows and a bow, while she leant, as she stood watching and waiting, on a paddle carved with curious designs.

Her face brightened as she beheld the white chief coming toward her, and she stepped forward to meet him, extending her hand, while she said:

"Has the pale-face anger in his breast because Lallah has sent for him?"

"No indeed, Lallah, for am I not your friend, and could I be angry with the niece of my friend and father, Chief Soto?"

"You are going away?" she said abruptly, speaking in good English, and changing from the Seminole tongue, which Trevor spoke indifferently.

"Yes."

"Where do you go?"

"To the sea-shore."

"Not alone?"

"No, many warriors go with me."

"To battle?"

"Yes."

"Do not go."

"Why?"

The Indian girl looked troubled, and then said:

"Lallah dreamed that she saw you dead."

"It was but a dream," he said indifferently.

"Dreams are warnings from the Great Spirit."

"I would be little loss if I did die, Lallah," he said restlessly.

"No, no, do not say so, for your red people here would mourn for you, and Lallah's heart would break."

"Why, Lallah?" he said earnestly.

"The Indian girl speaks the truth, white chief, for she loves you."

"Ah, Lallah, I am sorry to hear you say so, for my heart belongs to a fair girl far from here, and I have friendship only for others."

"You do not love me?" she said almost in a whisper.

"I love another, one of my own people, Lallah."

"Why can you not stay here among my people, for I will love you, and do all I can to make you forget the pale-face girl?"

"I have stayed here, Lallah, for a long time; but I am not just to myself to remain here, leading this aimless, vagabond life, and I must go away."

"Don't leave Lallah," she pleaded.

"Ah, my poor girl, you must forget me, and learn to love some brave of your tribe."

"You will make your cousin, Iron Face, a good wife, and I am sure that he loves you, as do many other splendid young warriors of your people."

"Lallah has but one heart."

"Well, give it to other than to me, for I have no heart to give you in return."

"Will you do one thing for Lallah?"

"Anything that I can do, gladly I will."

"Do not go on this war-trail to-night."

"I must."

"Remember my dream."

"I cannot heed it."

"And you will go?"

"I must."

She drooped her head and remained silent a moment, and then again turned toward him.

Her face seemed haggard, so keenly did she suffer; but she held out her hand and said simply:

"Good-by."

"Good-by, Lallah, and cheer up, for you have a bright life before you, and one day, when you become the wife of Iron Face, you will be queen of your people."

"No, no."

"I will not forget you, Lallah, and I will bring you many presents when I come back, for I feel that we will be successful to-night."

"Remember the warning dream the Great Spirit gave to Lallah."

"I do not heed it, Lallah."

"Good-by," she said almost harshly, and turning, she stepped quickly to the shore, sprung into her canoe, and paddled swiftly across the lake toward the Indian village.

For a few moments Tom Trevor stood, gazing after her, and then, as a misty rain began to fall, and darkness was near at hand, he turned and retraced his way slowly back along the pathway through the forest.

Going to the tepee of Chief Soto, he bade him farewell, and said:

"Under a book in my lodge is a letter, which I wish you, chief, if I am slain to-night, to take to the lady, at whose house I was stopping when I met you up in the town."

"Will you do this for me?"

"The wish of my brother is as a command to me," was the answer.

Then farewells were said, and, in the darkness and rain the canoes left the shore and headed across the lake, the red-skin helmsman, seemingly steering by instinct for a given point, for the night was black, the rain was falling steadily, and not a star was visible above them.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

RED-SKIN TARS.

UPON the shore, and in the shadow of the trees, though the darkness was great, and they could not have been seen a few yards off, the red-skin sailors were assembled.

The rain fell slowly, and the surf came in with mournful roar, while only the light gleaming from the stern cabin port of the schooner, a mile distant, could be seen.

In the inlet beyond the strip of forest-land the larger boats belonging to the red-skins had been left, and light canoes had been brought over and lay upon the beach.

Silent as death, their eyes fixed upon the distant schooner, unmindful of the rain, the warriors waited.

Near them stood their white leader, Tom Trevor, and Iron Face, their chief's son, was by his side.

"Let us go," at last said Trevor, and the Indians came down to the shore.

The surf was light, their canoes were launched, and springing into them, they rode over the breakers out into quieter water.

The first canoes awaited, and others brought out braves for them until they were all grouped together, a dangerous little fleet, thirteen in number.

Then Trevor told them their duty, and they moved forward.

The pattering of the falling rain was the only sound, for the paddles made none, and the canoes glided forward without a ripple.

As they neared the light out upon the water that marked the pirate schooner, they divided in four groups, two paddling around to approach the vessel on the other side, and two remaining to attack on this.

In blissful ignorance of their danger, the pirates crouched under the sheltering canvas forward, and the officer of the deck close to the bulwarks.

Not a sound was heard out upon the sea, the steady pour of the rain was monotonous, and the sullen fall of the surf he hardly heard.

He anticipated no danger off that wild shore, and dreamed only of a coming breeze that would carry them away to more deeds of death that would bring booty and gold.

Nearer and nearer crept the canoes, and without a word being heard, they reached the schooner's side.

"At them, Seminoles!"

With yells that went in a wild chorus far across the waters, the red-skin sailors sprung upon the deck of the pirate schooner.

"Fore, aft, and upon either side they poured, and, as the pirates sprung to their feet in terror, and rushed in frantic despair from below decks, the red-skin sailors did their deadly work.

Shot down, hurled overboard, cut down with gleaming steel, the pirates were shown no more mercy than they had shown upon many a reddened deck, and the battle was soon won by the daring sailor braves.

"Hold!"

The cry rung out upon the lips of Tom Trevor, the firing and clashing of steel ceased, the cries for mercy ended, and all was silence.

"Do you surrender?" cried Trevor, addressing a group of a dozen pirates at bay, who had been driven to the fore-castle where, though they cried for mercy, they still fought on with the desperation of despair.

"I do," said the pirate leader, who was wounded, yet had fought on for life.

"Down with your weapons, then!"

"Will we be massacred?"

"No, I will protect you now."

"Have you the power to do so from the red fiends and merciless wretches?" asked the pirate leader.

"I have; but you are a strange man to call these red-skins merciless, after the lack of mercy you have ever shown."

"You know me?"

"I do."

"Do you pledge yourself that I shall not be hanged if I surrender?"

"I make no pledges."

"You know what I am?"

"Yes."

"What am I?"

"A pirate."

"I will surrender, with my men, and stop bloodshed, if you will make terms with me."

"I will not."

"Then, by Heaven! you die!"

As he spoke, the pirate chief sprung forward, a pistol in his hand.

His act was wholly unlooked for, by Trevor, and the pistol was leveled and the finger on the trigger, so that death seemed assured.

But, as the outlaw's finger touched the trigger a red-skin suddenly bounded between the muzzle of the pistol and Trevor, and at that instant the report came.

In a heap on the deck the red-skin dropped, his life sacrificed to save the white chief, and at the same instant the cry broke from the lips of Tom Trevor:

"At them again, my braves!"

With wild yells the Indian warriors again commenced the fight, and the pirates were driven before the infuriated braves in an onslaught that was irresistible.

One by one they fell although many cried for mercy, and the maddened pirate chief, wounded, bleeding and savage was driven to his last stand, with a few of his followers about him.

"Beat them back, you dogs, and we may yet save the schooner!" shouted the buccaner.

But his men seemed to realize the madness

of this assertion, as they could see that nothing could save them from utter destruction but the mercy of white chief of the Indian sailors.

So, as one man they again cried lustily for mercy, and to prove their intentions were honest, many of them threw down their weapons upon the deck.

"Do you surrender now, Sir Pirate?" asked Trevor, waving his braves back.

"There is nothing else that I can do," was the sullen reply.

"Then down with your swords!"

Down upon the deck the weapons were thrown, irons were brought, and the pirates were quickly secured.

"Who are you?" the leader asked, as he was carried into the cabin and given into the hands of his outlaw surgeon.

"We have met before, Sir Pirate, as you doubtless recall, for I was one of your many victims."

"But you are my prisoner now," was the reply, and with lanterns upon the deck, Trevor set to work to look after the wounded.

Many of the pirates had been slain, or in their fright had leaped overboard to perish, while many more had been wounded.

These were taken below.

Several braves had also fallen, and a score had received light wounds; but then what cured they for that, for they were the victors and victory soothed their sorrows and eased their hurts.

As Trevor stood a moment gazing over the dismal scene, he heard a faint voice say: "White chief!"

He started, for certainly none of his braves had spoken.

From whence came the sound he knew not, and he stood perplexed, while, through his mind flashed the warning of Lallah, from some unaccountable reason.

"White chief!"

Again his name was repeated.

Did the voice come from above?

Did it come from the sea?

He could not tell, and he glanced up into the rigging.

He could see nothing. A couple of battle-lanterns forward shed a dim light, and there he saw the forms of his braves caring for the wounded.

Certainly the voice had not come from them.

He stepped to the side of the vessel and glanced over.

There was nothing there—no one.

Then he felt a light touch upon his leg, and again came the voice:

"White chief!"

Instantly he dropped upon his knees, and beheld in the shadow of a gun curled up there, a human form.

"I am dying, white chief."

"Great God! Lallah, you here?" he cried.

"Yes."

"How came you here?" he asked.

"I came in the canoe with the braves."

Trevor was startled, and he hardly knew what to do or say.

"You are wounded?"

"Yes, here," and she placed her hand upon her breast.

"Why, Lallah, you wear the dress of a brave, and your face is covered with war-paint," he said, as he raised her form to a sitting posture, and turning her face toward the battle-lanterns saw that it was streaked with war-paint.

"Yes, Lallah came to fight with you."

"You should not have done this, poor girl, for you have risked your life, and you seem badly wounded."

"You remember Lallah's dream?"

"Yes, but I am safe and you are wounded."

"Lallah saved you."

"Great Heaven! you are the one that sprung before the pirate chief when he fired upon me?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Lallah!" and the strong man could say no more.

"Better that Lallah die for love than live for sorrow," she said.

"No, no, no! This should not be! But I lose time here when perhaps you can be saved."

"Ho, Iron Face, ho!"

The Indian youth came bounding to the spot.

In a few words Trevor told him all that had occurred and said:

"Now go to the cabin and bring that pirate surgeon here—the medicine-man."

The youth bounded away, his heart full, for he loved devotedly his pretty cousin, who was but a year younger than himself, and whom he had hoped to some day make his wife.

In a moment he came back, half-dragging the pirate surgeon with him.

"Save this girl's life, sir, and I set you free," said Trevor quickly.

"What girl, senor?"

"This is not a brave, but a young girl, who, in disguise, came with us. It was your chief who, in aiming at me, shot her, and if you save her, I will land you at the first port, a free man, and with ample gold for your use; so now to work!"

"Aid me to take her into the cabin," eagerly said the surgeon.

Trevor tenderly raised her in his arms, and bore her to the cabin, placing her upon a settee.

"Come, Ramirez, go on with dressing my wounds," growled the chief.

"I work for freedom now, not you," returned the surgeon, as he began to examine the extent of the Indian girl's wound.

"You prefer to serve a red-skin to your chief?"

"Silence, sir! this is an Indian girl, my friend, and she is sorely wounded, and your surgeon goes free if he saves her, while you can wait, for if you bleed to death it would but save you from the yard arm," sternly said Trevor.

"The wound has bled freely, but I do not believe it will be fatal. See! I have extracted the ball."

"She will need careful nursing," said the surgeon.

"She shall have it."

"It barely missed entering the heart, though it did not penetrate very deep, strange to say; but if the bleeding is not soon checked, she must soon die."

"Do your best," and Trevor left the cabin and joined Iron Face on deck, the boy being almost crushed with grief.

Soon the surgeon came on deck and said:

"The bleeding I have stopped, senor, and the wound is dressed; but she must be kept very quiet."

"I have also looked after the chief's wounds, and now will go forward among the men."

"Do so," and Trevor led the way, and the pirate surgeon did his duty faithfully.

After a while he returned to the cabin to see how Lallah was getting along, and he was gone but a moment when he came hastily upon deck.

"Ah, senor!"

"Well?" quickly asked the young sailor.

"Senor, the maiden wished to die, for she removed the bandages herself, and has bled to death."

"Dead!"

"Yes, senor."

"Poor girl!"

"But you did your duty, Senor Surgeon, and you can go ashore now, with the wounded braves, and thus make your way to the nearest town, which they will take you to, for I shall send the body of the poor girl home to her people."

It was a sad blow to Trevor, and a most bitter one indeed to Iron Face, to feel that poor Lallah was dead, while the braves bewailed the fate of the one whom all her people so dearly loved.

Getting the dead braves and several of the worst wounded ones together, Trevor placed them in the canoes, with Lallah's body also, and started shoreward.

The pirate surgeon also went along, with some little baggage he had, and landing, the canoes were borne over to the lake-shore.

Here a couple of braves who were but little hurt, were placed in charge of the two canoes bearing their dead and wounded comrades, and farewells were spoken as they slowly paddled away upon the dark waters on their way back to the Indian village.

Then Trevor, Iron Face, and the others with him, started on their way back to the schooner.

When Trevor and his crew had returned on board and all had been made shipshape

once more, the young sailor ordered the anchor up.

His red-skin seamen sprung to their work with a will, and knew their duty; most of them had been at different times seamen upon Gulf trading-vessels, while they could manage their own little vessels with a skill that was marvelous.

The sails were set, for with the coming of dawn a breeze was springing up and the rain had ceased, and the schooner moved up the coast, heading for an inlet.

Through a deep channel she passed, and crossing the bay-like basin of water, upon the shores of which was the Indian village, the anchor was let fall just after sunrise not a cable's-length from the beach, while wild was the welcome that Soto and his people gave the sailor braves.

Turning the wounded over to Soto to carry up to the town, leagues away, and the prisoners, except the two men whom he selected, and the pirate captain, Trevor put the booty ashore for the use of the Indians, as he had promised, excepting the iron box of gold and precious stones, the fruits of many a robbery, which he found beneath the floor, in an opening in the cabin.

Bitter were the curses upon him of the pirate captain, as he saw his treasure discovered, while Trevor gazed in wonder at its value.

The two men whom he had retained out of the gang of prisoners were the most intelligent and honest-looking of the lot, and calling them aside, he said:

"Men, I need a little aid, and I shall take you with me, for I go on a cruise to-night, so it will be to your advantage to act squarely with me."

"Are you willing to take the chances of pardon and serve me?"

"Yes, indeed, sir," were their responses, and that night the captured schooner sailed away from the shores of Florida, with a red-skin crew upon her decks, and Trevor and the captain, and Iron Face and the two buccaners as officers, while wounded, and in irons, the outlaw chief lay in his cabin, a prey to despairing reflections.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CORSAIR KING'S LEAGUE.

THE wounded pirate chief having recovered rapidly, Trevor had him removed to the forward part of the vessel, to be out of his sight, for the bitter oaths of the wretch, and his wicked face were by no means pleasant to hear and behold.

Finding the schooner fleet seaworthy, and in good condition, Trevor had started out upon a cruise, the nature of which will soon be developed.

He had written a letter to the authorities at St. Augustine, by Chief Soto, telling them of his capture, and sending the prisoners; but asking them not to make the affair public until they should hear from him again, as he had gone upon a special mission in his prize, with his red allies as sailors, and had taken the chief as he had hoped to gain from him certain information.

This attempt was fruitless, however, for all that the pirate chief would say, was:

"Give me my pardon, set me ashore at a point I will name, and I'll give you the information you need."

"Ay, I'll betray any one of the League; but not otherwise."

"I will seek information elsewhere," returned Trevor, and so he had the chief removed to quarters forward, and going into the cabin called to one of the two pirates acting as mates to follow him.

"My man, you are an American?" said Trevor.

"Yes, sir, out of Portland."

"How is it you came to turn pirate?"

"I was mate of a Kennebec coaster, sir, got taken by a pirate, was offered a berth, as he needed men, and I took it, hoping to get away; but I got my brain turned by the glitter of gold, and so I stayed, and my neck is now in the noose."

"There is one way to get it out."

"Well, sir?"

"What were you on board this schooner?"

"Boatswain, sir!"

"You are aware of the haunts of the League of Corsairs?"

"There is but one, sir, and that is among the Bahamas."

"How many vessels are there in the League?"

"There have been but two until late, sir."

"And now?"

"There have been two more added lately, sir."

"Where is their cruising-ground?"

"This schooner, sir, has these waters, and the West Indies, one of the new vessels is to be sent to the Caribbean, another from the Bermuda Islands as far as Long Island Sound, and the fourth on the New England coast."

"They are to meet at the Bahamas on a given date twice a year, and divide spoils."

"Now, sir, I have told you what I know, and I hope you will favor me."

"You have told me the truth, for I have here the orders of the Corsair King to your captain, which he has lately received."

"Yes, sir."

"Who is this Corsair King?"

"A devil, sir, and no mistake."

"What is his name?"

"We know him only as Commodore King, Evil Eye the Buccaneer, and the Corsair King."

"You have seen him?"

"Yes, sir, for we met his vessel at sea ten days ago."

"Where is he now?"

"On the New England coast, or there is where he headed for."

"And the two new vessels?"

"We expect one southward daily; the one that is going to the Caribbean sea."

"And the other?"

"Is on her station off the New England coast."

"All well armed?"

"Yes, sir."

"And manned?"

"They run from fifty to eighty men, sir."

"You know these vessels?"

"I know the King's sir; but the captain has the descriptions of the other two, and the signals."

"Do you remember the signals?"

"No, sir, but my mate, on deck, was quartermaster, and he does."

"Call your mate."

The pirate obeyed, and the other one entered the cabin, looking extremely nervous.

"My man, I have just had a talk with your shipmate here, and I have asked him sundry questions."

"Those questions I shall now ask you, and if you answer truthfully, both you and he shall have full pardon for your crimes, and share in the prize-money for certain captures I hope to make."

"Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Trevor then asked in substance the same questions he had the first pirate, and received about the same replies.

"I am convinced that you have told me the truth, both of you, so now you may be assured of my protection."

"But one question more."

"Yes, sir," both said.

"You were quartermaster on this schooner?" and he turned to the second pirate.

"I was, sir."

"And you know the signals between the League vessels?"

"The old ones, sir?"

"Yes, all."

"There were changes made since we got the new vessels, and different ones for each vessel."

"Now, I know well how to signal the Corsair King's craft; but I have not practiced on the others."

"You know them?"

"Yes, sir, I have a copy of them."

"Then go on deck and practice them, for we must meet the Ruthless bound south soon."

"Yes, sir, the captain said we must watch for her in this latitude, and she'd bring late orders from the King."

"All right, now do your duty and your pardon and your prize-money are assured, with a berth on board an honest craft, afterward."

The men were profuse in their thanks, and went on deck, one of them, at Trevor's request, asking Iron Face the Indian youth to go into the cabin.

Iron Face was a handsome Indian, straight as an arrow, and with a remarkably intelligent face.

His mother had been a white woman, a settler's daughter, who had given up her people for love of Soto, and to her death the old chief had made her a good husband, while she held sway as the queen of the tribe.

The strong character in the young chief's face, his stern nature and firmness, had gained him the name of Iron Face, and it was not undeserved, when taken with the red-skin interpretation of its meaning.

He was a skillful sailor, though not a navigator, and Trevor had made him his first officer, which delighted the young Indian greatly.

"Iron Face," he said, as the youth entered:

"I have promised these two men pardon, if they would help me in what I intend to do."

"Now, sir, in this Corsair League, to which this schooner belonged, there are four vessels, and it is in our power, with this one in our possession, to capture the three."

"We have as brave a crew as ever trod a deck, and the drilling I am giving the braves at the guns, are making expert gunners of them, while for boarding or at close quarters, they have no equals, if we have hard fighting to do."

"I am sailing northward, in the endeavor to capture these other vessels, and I wish you to explain to your braves that, though we may be gone for months, perhaps, we will return with great honor, and they can make their people rich in booty."

"Now are you with me on this sea trail to the end?"

"Yes, I will go, and where I go my braves will follow."

"They trust my brother the white chief; they love him, and they will do as he tells them, for he has treated them well," was the answer.

"Then, Iron Face, we will now go on the hunt for the fleet of the Corsair King, and hemp will be stretched by dead weights before our cruise has ended," was the significant reply of Tom Trevor.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE CRUISE OF THE RED ROVERS.

"SAIL HO!"

An Indian perched aloft had given the cry, for Tom Trevor had gotten his crew into good training.

The schooner was some leagues off Cape Hatteras, just out of sight of land, and the sail discovered was about the same distance from the shore and coming down the coast.

"Ay, ay, I see her," called back Trevor, who came on deck at the cry, and taking his glass he went aloft.

Turning his gaze upon the strange sail, which was now rapidly rising above the horizon, he said:

"By Father Neptune! but I should know that craft, and I do; I am disappointed, for I was in hopes it was the pirate, bound to the Caribbean, which we should have met ere this, if we have not passed her in the night."

"I shall give yonder craft a wide berth."

"But no, for I can easily keep my distance, and she will not run after an armed vessel."

"I will have a closer look."

He took another long look through his glass, and then said:

"Can it be that she is the pirate, for she is certainly armed?"

"I remember that the letter of the Corsair King to the pirate captain, which I have in the cabin, said he had captured two fine brigs, which he would devote to free cruising, and thus enlarge his fleet."

"Yes, that is the brig I know so well, and she is armed."

"Now to go below and have Barrett signal as one of the League vessels."

Descending to the deck, Trevor was met by the pirate Barrett, who asked:

"Is not that the brig Restless, sir, for she answers the Corsair King's description?"

"I think so, though I know yonder vessel well, and she has been evidently captured by the Corsair King."

"Get out your signals and try him."

"If he is not, sir, we'll have to run, for

he is well armed, and very fast, as you can see."

"No, I have no reason to run, for if an American cruiser, I will signal him, board and make my report."

"This schooner is not a pirate now, Barrett."

"True, sir, I had forgotten, being so used to running from all vessels with claws."

Then Barrett ran up his signals, and instantly they were answered by the brig.

"What do you signal, Barrett?"

"King, sir."

"And his answer should be?"

"League."

"Ah! what next?"

"I'll run up now, *Bahama*."

"And his answer should be what?"

"Retreat."

The signals followed as said, and then Barrett remarked:

"One more trial, sir."

"What do you send up?"

"*Booty and beauty*."

"I see."

"And his answer should be:

"*Gold and precious stones*."

"And there it is."

"That is our man, Barrett."

"Yes, sir; there is no mistaking that."

"Now signal for him to lay to and we'll come down and run alongside, as we have a transfer to make."

"That will put him off his guard."

"It will, sir."

The signal was sent up, the answer came back:

"All right."

The brig then lay to, and the Indian braves crept up to the racks, seized their fire-arms and knives, and the guns were already loaded with canister, double-shotted and ready to fire.

With the brig lying to, and the schooner bearing down with a seven-knot breeze, the advantage was all with the latter, especially when the crew of the former little dreamed of danger.

Running down with the wind, it appeared to be the intention of the schooner's captain to round to after passing astern, and come up slowly to the brig.

Arriving within a cable's length of the brig, the schooner's bows suddenly swerved from its course, and loud rung out the order:

"Fire!"

The little vessel trembled under the discharge of the guns, and the iron hail tore through the bulwarks and rigging of the brig, reddening the deck and strewing it with dead and wounded.

"Let them have the other broadside—now!" shouted Trevor, who was at the helm himself, and he brought the schooner, around in position to fire, and the second discharge was truly aimed.

The brig was by far the larger vessel, her guns were heavier, and she had a large crew; but so wholly were the pirates taken by surprise, that they became panic-stricken, and their leader could not get them to their guns.

In the meantime the schooner drew nearer, and the muskets of the red-skins began to pick off the pirates, while, running astern, the little vessel raked the brig from stern to fore-castle with her guns, shotted with canister and grape.

It was a fearful ordeal for the pirates, for their vessel was lying to, their guns could not be brought to bear upon the moving schooner, their decks were covered with the dead and dying, and they were truly getting paid back in their own red coin for their crimes.

"Do you surrender?" shouted Trevor, as he bore up toward the brig as though to board.

"To your guns!" yelled the pirate captain, trying to force his crew to the guns.

"Fire!" shouted Trevor, and the bow pivot sent a charge of grape into the brig, while a volley of musketry followed.

Nearer came the schooner, and as Trevor brought her up into the wind to run alongside, the pirates shouted in a chorus for mercy.

"Down into the hold of your vessel, all of you, or I show no mercy!"

Like bees the pirates swarmed below, and the deck was left to the dying and the dead, among the former being the chief, who had been wounded in the last volley.

Upon the deck of the brig sprung the red-skin tars, and standing by cabin and hatch-way the pirates were called from below, one by one, and put in irons.

Thus was the brig captured, with hardly the loss of a man on the schooner, for a few straggling shots had been fired by the pirates, so completely were they stunned by the attack, and the trap in which they had been caught.

Through his having fired small shot only, Trevor saw that the brig was but very little damaged, and the rigging and sails were quickly repaired.

"Barrett, I will send you on board the brig to navigate her, and the young chief, Iron Face, will accompany you, while you, Pontiac, stay with me," said Trevor, after all was in readiness to continue on the cruise northward.

Then after giving a few instructions, Trevor went on board the schooner, and the two vessels, side by side, headed on their course for the New England coast.

Two weeks after, one afternoon just before sunset, the schooner, which was in advance of the brig, sighted a large vessel, apparently a brig-of-war, lying in among the islands in Penobscot Bay, on the Maine coast.

Pontiac signaled quickly, and receiving a correct answering signal, the schooner held on into the bay, and the brig following, also signaled, and the two vessels ran down close to the anchored vessel, which was discovered to be undergoing repairs, having evidently been crippled in action.

With their guns ready, the two vessels ranged near the crippled pirate brig, and in a voice that spread terror on board the outlaw craft, Trevor cried:

"Sir Pirate, surrender, or we fire!"

A yell broke from the pirates, and in dismay they rushed about the deck, some running below and others leaping overboard, for they saw that they were fairly caught, and in the darkness supposed they had been entrapped by American vessels-of-war.

Some of them, however, sprung to their starboard battery, and opened upon the schooner, which replied with terrific effect, and running alongside, Trevor boarded with his braves, and the combat began.

Coming up on the other side of the anchored vessel, the brig threw out her grapnels, and Iron Face and Barrett led their warriors on board, and quickly the fight was won.

"Now, Barrett, the Corsair King's craft alone remains to be taken, and as soon as this brig is put in a condition to sail, we go in search of her.

"Now, I'll put you in irons below decks, and by pretending to be a prisoner, when I send down the other captives, you can find out just where the Corsair King is, and all about him."

"I'll do it, sir, and Pontiac can repair damages on the brig," was the reply.

CHAPTER XL.

BESSIE.

TAKING his gig he went alone, and landing at a rocky point jutting out into the bay, he ascended a path to the cliff-top above.

A woman stood at the summit, watching his approach, and behind her some rods distant, sheltered in a pine grove, was a cabin.

It was an humble, but a pleasant home, with indications of comfort hardly expected to be found in a habitation thus isolated.

The woman was neatly dressed, had a plain, but kindly face, and had passed the meridian of life.

"Yes, it is he; but he comes too late," she said.

"Well, Mother Marsden, I have come back again, after a long stay," Trevor said in a kindly way as he grasped the woman's hand.

"Would you have come, now that you have gotten to be a big captain, and commander of war-ships, unless you had been forced to run into the bay to attack the crippled pirate?" the woman asked in a voice that was cold, yet not unkind.

"Yes, for I wished to see Bessie and have a talk with her."

"To see Bessie?"

"Yes, Mother Marsden, for why else have I come?"

"Do you see yonder white stone on the hill among the pines?" and she grasped his arm and pointed inland.

"Yes," and his voice sunk to a whisper.

"You will find her there."

"Dead?"

"Yes."

"Good God! When did she die?"

"Two months ago."

"Tell me of her death, good Mother Marsden."

"There is little to tell, for she went to the city to seek you, and heard that you were to be married to a grand lady.

"So she came back home, faded away day by day, and died of a broken heart for love of you."

"It was false, Mother Marsden, for I had no idea of doing an act so vile.

"I married your daughter because I hoped to make her happy, and God knows I tried to do my duty.

"I refused to marry another, and, not telling my secret then, until it brought untold misery upon me.

"But I can never cease to regret poor, good, loving little Bessie, nor will I forget that you are her mother, and, with your good husband, I will take you away from this rude, solitary life, and make your latter days at least happy ones.

"Come, call Captain Peter, and get your things ready that you desire to take, for you go with me far from here."

"No, my days have been passed here, and here let my life end.

"Peter is doing well now, for he bought a pilot-boat with the money you gave him, and makes a good living.

"Bessie was to help him, but she took ill, and so our boy is coming to aid his father, and he brings with him a lovely little wife, who will take Bessie's place in our hearts.

"It was a mistake, sir, for you to marry Bessie, for oil and water won't mix, the high and the low are not born to marry each other, and so unhappiness and misery comes to both.

"You did not love her, but married her out of sympathy, as she knew, and yonder piece of stone covers her broken heart.

"You are good, sir, and you will always find a welcome here, should you be willing to come and see us, and Bessie's grave belongs to you, and not to us, for she was *your* wife."

Trevor stood like a statue, his features stern and cold while the woman talked.

Then he said:

"I will go to her grave."

For a long time he remained there alone, and retracing his way to the cabin, said:

"Good Mother Marsden, give this purse of gold to Captain Peter, and remember that I will never forget you. Good by."

Returning to the schooner, he found the brig ready to sail, and the three vessels stood together out of the bay, under full sail, for Barrett had discovered just where the Corsair King could be found.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE CORSAIR KING.

A PLEASANT entertainment was in progress at the elegant mansion of merchant Leonard Templeton, for to the earlier scenes of my story I now return.

There were present a number of guests, several officers from the fort, half a dozen naval officers, and some ladies, among the latter being Miss Ellen Vancouver, the heiress, and her escort was Marvel Shelley, the profligate that had pretended reform, after the death of his father at the hands of pirates.

Captain Loyd Chester was there also, and Captain Lucius Sheldon, the latter having just returned from a successful voyage in behalf of merchant Templeton.

The merchant as host, was in a good humor, and Captain Frank Fanchon, soon to be married to the beautiful Lucette never appeared happier, while upon her face had crept a look of sadness, strange in one who was to soon become the bride of a man so much admired as was her lover.

There was one other there, too, dressed in the uniform of a naval captain.

This was Dudley Burr, the young officer who had saved Lucette from the tiger.

He was on his way to New York to take command of a vessel-of-war, and passing through Boston, he could not refrain from calling upon the woman he loved.

He had found there a number of guests he had not dreamed of meeting, but Lucette had urged his remaining and he had done so, though it was misery to him to see there the man she was to marry.

Suddenly there strode into the room a tall form, clad in buckskin from head to foot, and carrying a drawn sword in his hand.

Every one seemed astounded, and Lucette cried in a thrilling voice, as she bounded forward:

"Brother Tracey!"

"Back, Lucette! Back, all! I am here to capture the Corsair King, known as Evil Eye the Buccaneer.

"You are my prisoner, sir!"

He sprung toward Captain Fanchon as he spoke, and his sword-point pressed hard over the heart of the man he accused.

Deadly pale, but calm, Captain Fanchon said sternly:

"There is some mistake here, sir."

"There is none, for I have tracked you, Sir Pirate, and I proclaim you Evil Eye the Corsair King."

"Never!"

"Hold! Move but a finger and I drive this sword through your heart.

"Back, father, for though I left here with your curse upon me it has been a blessing to me, and your Ocean Vagabond has returned in time to save his loved sister from becoming the bride of the most daring pirate that sails the seas, and whom you selected for her:

"Hold there, Marvel Shelley, for you cannot escape!"

"Show yourselves, Red Rovers!"

At the command the doors and windows swarmed with Indians, silent, stern, and in full war-paint.

The ladies shrieked, the men dropped their hands to their sword-hilts; but Tracey Templeton continued:

"That man, Marvel Shelley, arranged with this Pirate King to kill his old father and sack his home, so arrest him for I have the proofs!"

Quivering with fear, the guilty man sunk into a chair, while two braves entered and took positions on either side of him.

"This man, Fanchon, is no trader, but a pirate, and he it was who captured the brig Lucette, forging my name to a letter he wrote to Lucius Sheldon, to make all believe I had run off with the craft.

"He it was who cut out vessel after vessel, for he had his schooner full of men, and sent them on their mission in a manner that was most marvelous for strategy and daring.

"Under the guise of an honest man he has acted, deceiving all, driving you, Chester, almost mad by his mysterious successes, and at the same time equipping a fleet for piracy.

"That fleet I have possession of, and the vessels all are anchored off-shore here now, for I took his schooner at her anchorage an hour ago.

"Your brig, father, your brig, Captain Burr, the Restless, and the schooner Gold Hunter, I have in my possession, and with them many a pirate prisoner that will be hanged.

"I have saved you, my sister, from becoming a pirate's bride; I have saved you, Miss Vancouver, from being made a murderer's wife, and, with the Corsair King my captive, his vessels and his crew in my hands, I am content.

"Rovers, seize that man!"

At the command, Iron Face entered with two braves, and glided toward Fanchon, but quick as a flash he drove a knife to his heart, and, as he sunk to the floor, he said:

"I am Evil Eye, the Corsair King; but I saw and loved you, Lucette, and, as soon as I had hoarded up riches enough to enable me to live indeed like a king, I meant to give up the sea and become an honest man, living for you alone.

"Your brother foiled me, and this is the end.

"So be it; but I save my head from the hangman's noose.

"Lucette, farewell!"

Without another word, he fell back into the arms of the two braves, and in a moment more he was dead.

CHAPTER XLII.

CONCLUSION.

BITTERLY repentant of his sin toward his son, when he knew that he was married, yet wished to keep the secret from all, Mr. Templeton humbly begged his forgiveness. Most freely did Tracey grant it, and having accumulated, by his prize money, a fortune, the young sailor fitted up the pirate schooner Restless, as his yacht, and, with Lucius Sheldon as her captain, and his father and sister as passengers, set sail for Florida, his braves being his crew.

He ran into the harbor of St. Augustine, one pleasant evening, about sunset, and accompanied by his father and sister, walked out to the home of Mrs. Ronald.

Eulalie Langdon sat upon the piazza, reading a long letter from her father, which was full of the capture of the pirate fleet, by Tracey Templeton, who had been driven from home to become an ocean vagabond.

Looking up she saw Tracey, and sprung toward him; but wide opened her eyes when she was presented to his father and sister, and she discovered who it was that had sailed under the name of Tom Trevor.

Down to the Indian village sailed the schooner, a white crew shipped in St. Augustine on board, to relieve the Indian braves, and right happy was old Soto and his people to welcome them back, and the booty that the young sailor brought with him certainly gladdened the hearts of all.

After a visit to the grave of poor Lallah, who had lost her life for love of him, Trevor returned on board the schooner which at once started upon her voyage back to Boston, Eulalie going as Trevor's wife, and upon the arrival in port, they found that Marvel Shelley had taken his own life in jail, and that Ellen Vancouver was engaged to Loyd Chester.

After months had passed away, there was a grand double wedding at Seaside Temple, for Lucette was married to Captain Dudley Burr, and Ellen Vancouver, at the earnest urging of all, was married at the same time to Loyd Chester, Lucius Sheldon serving as "best man" for each couple.

As many of the pirates swore that they had been captured by the Corsair King, and forced to serve on his vessels, they were pardoned; but the leaders were taken to Hangman's Island and executed, thus ending the last scenes of the Evil Eve and his daring buccaners.

Among the papers of the Corsair King, was found that which showed how he had come into possession of the jewel necklace, which he had first presented to Lucette, and the merchant had recognized.

Poor Geraldine had been his captive, and she had died of a broken heart, when left at his island retreat, for she had become his wife, little dreaming that he was a corsair. He had deceived her as he had others.

With his son's riches far surpassing his own, Leonard Templeton seemed never to cease repining that he had bestowed upon him his curse and driven him from his home, and, as his mind wandered in later years, he was continually talking of Lucette's pirate lover, and his noble boy who had become an ocean wanderer at his command.

THE END.

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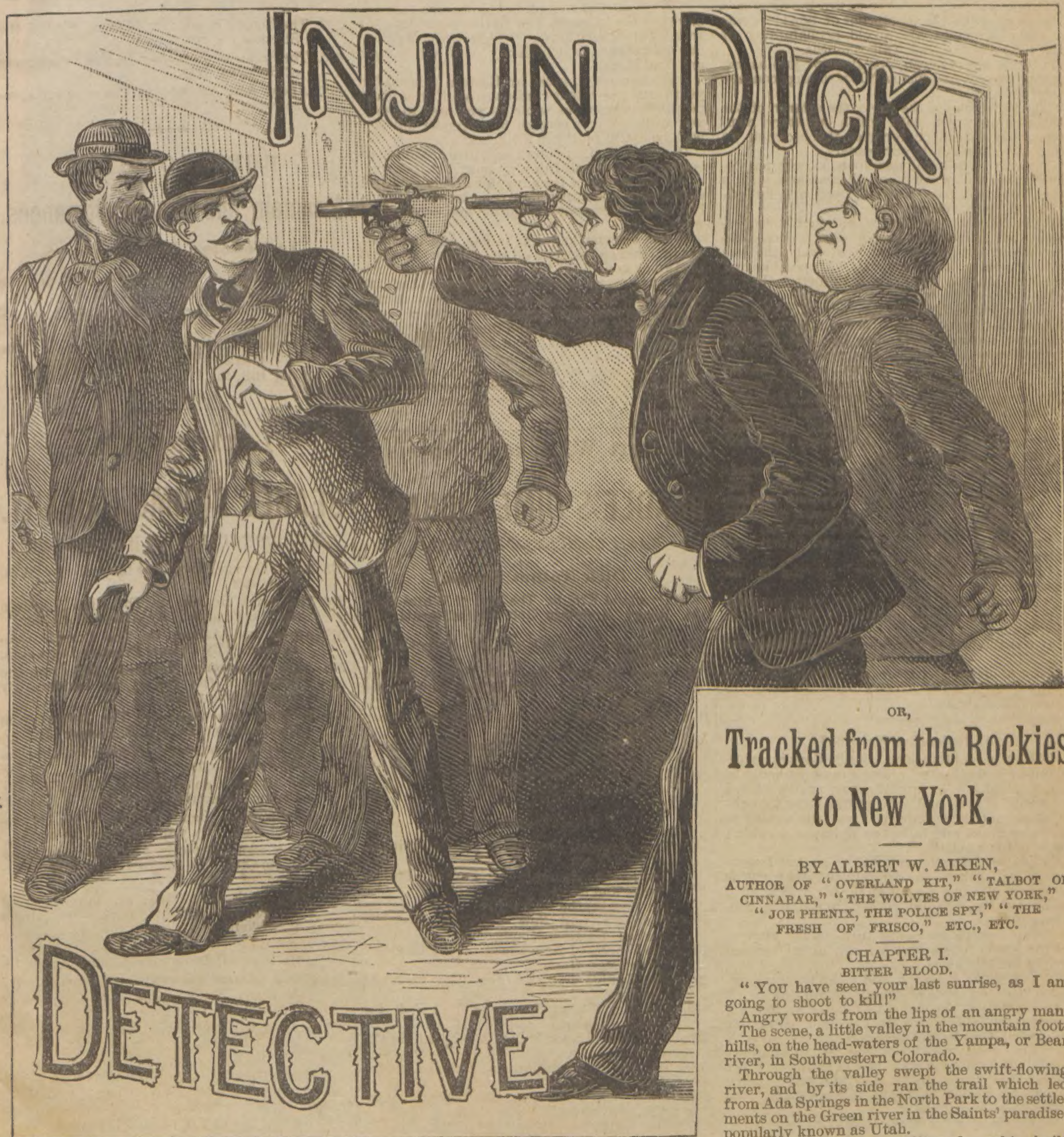
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OR, Tracked from the Rockies to New York.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "OVERLAND KIT," "TALBOT OF
CINNABAR," "THE WOLVES OF NEW YORK,"
"JOE PHENIX, THE POLICE SPY," "THE
FRESH OF FRISCO," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. BITTER BLOOD.

"You have seen your last sunrise, as I am
going to shoot to kill!"

Angry words from the lips of an angry man.
The scene, a little valley in the mountain foot-
hills, on the head-waters of the Yampa, or Bear
river, in Southwestern Colorado.

Through the valley swept the swift-flowing
river, and by its side ran the trail which led
from Ada Springs in the North Park to the settle-
ments on the Green river in the Saints' paradise,
popularly known as Utah.

In the valley stood a solitary log-cabin, built

"HOW ARE YOU?" QUOTH INJUN DICK. "QUITE A SURPRISE-PARTY, ISN'T IT?"

Injun Dick, Detective.

after the fashion common to the South, two apartments divided by an open passage through the center of the house.

In front of the cabin were three men.

One was seated on a tree-trunk, with a tin pan on his lap, engaged in the prosaic occupation of peeling potatoes, but the knife he used was an eight-inch bowie, more fitted for removing the cuticle of a bear than the outer skin of Paddy's favorite vegetable.

One of nature's noblemen was this potato-peeler, too: a little above the medium height in stature, magnificently built, with a frank, open face, fringed by dark hair, snugly trimmed, and lit up by a pair of clear brown-black eyes, so penetrating in their gaze, that it would seem their owner might boast, with the ancient god, that he could look steadily into the full-orbed sun.

This man, formed by nature to be a king among his fellows, is no stranger to the readers who have followed the fortunes of the hero of Overland Kit and its sequels, for he was no other than Dick Talbot in person.

Richard Talbot, bold Injun Dick, a few years older than when we last introduced him to our readers' notice, but in no respect materially changed.

He was dressed in the rough fashion common to the mining-region, but there was a nattiness to his dress, a style about it, that plainly distinguished him from the common herd.

He was well-armed, for besides the formidable bowie in his hand, two self-cocking seven-shooters adorned his waist, a pair of as fine tools as ever a man boasted.

A few feet from Talbot, engaged in frying "flap-jacks" in a pan over a fire burning in a rude sort of fire-place built out of boulders, was another personage, also an old acquaintance of the reader of the Dick Talbot novels.

It was the veteran, Joe Bowers, just as fat, just as greasy, and just as full of strange conceits as ever.

The third man of the three, the utterer of the threatening words with which our story commences, is a stranger, for upon this occasion we first introduce him to our readers.

He was a tall, angular man, loosely put together, a man of forty or thereabouts, with a peculiarly odd face, lantern-jawed and hollow-cheeked, with sunken eyes.

Not a handsome man now, although it was evident that he had once been a pretty good-looking fellow, but strong liquor, to which he was plainly a slave, had worked its will upon him and reduced him to a condition little better than a wreck.

He was called Leander Beaverwick, but after the odd fashion common to the mining region he had been nicknamed Limber Bee, and was seldom addressed by any other appellation.

He had been absent on a visit to the nearest camp, some five miles down the stream, Yampa City, from whence all the miners in the foot-hills procured their supplies, and had just returned, with a full cargo of whisky aboard, as Bowers observed when he noticed the zig-zag approach up the trail of Limber Bee.

Limber Bee had come up the trail in his winding, devious way, halted directly opposite Talbot, pulled out a ready-cocked revolver suddenly, and leveling it full at the breast of Injun Dick, addressed him as we have chronicled.

For once in his life, at any rate, Talbot was taken completely by surprise.

Limber Bee had "the drop" on him in the worst kind of way.

"Down on your knees and say your prayers, for you have only a minute or two more of life!"

It was the face of a madman that Talbot gazed at.

Part of opening chapter of "Injun Dick, Detective," Albert W. Aiken's masterpiece of his Dick Talbot Series.

[Illustration Extract.]

"W'ot a cold-blooded cuss," Bowers whispered in Talbot's ear. "Durn my buttons if he don't go ahead of any Western rustler that I ever run across, and who would have thought it of such a durned innocent cuss who looked as green as grass, and talked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth?"

"Yes, he did rather play it on us, but I reckon we will return the compliment and turn the tables on him in a way that he will despise in a minute or two," Talbot replied, in the same cautious tone.

"Cap, hadn't we better turn on the glim so as to be able to see w'ot we are about?" asked one of the intruders.

"Yes, strike a match and light the gas," replied the soft-spoken youth whom the pards had known by the name of Smithers; thus revealing the fact, which the two had previously suspected, that he was the leader of the party.

"You need not be afraid of waking our birds, for their next waking will be in the other world, and I've no doubt that they will be very much astonished to find themselves there," the young man continued.

"But that is the way we do business in the East, and these Westerners who are not smart

enough to be up to our tricks, ought not to venture amid the jungles of civilization."

The rest of the gang chuckled hoarsely at this observation.

"They think it is a most excellent joke now, but they may have reason to change their minds the moment the gas is turned on," Talbot whispered in Bowers's ear.

"You bet!" responded that worthy.

One of the gang struck a match and lit the gas.

And the moment the light flashed forth, the tableau revealed was certainly a striking one.

Rising to their feet, just as the light dispelled the darkness, with their leveled revolvers the two pards "covered" the intruders, who were clustered by the open door.

As the two had anticipated, the three ruffians with Smithers, were the same fellows who had dogged their footsteps in Broadway.

The midnight marauders were taken at a most decided disadvantage.

Not one of them displayed any arms, and they gave a gasp of astonishment as they glared upon the Westerners.

"How are you?" quoth Talbot. "Quite a surprise-party, isn't it?"

"You didn't give us the proper warning that you intended to call, but we are ready to receive you all the same."

"We children of the frontier, the sons of the wilderness, may not be quite up to the dodges of you Eastern sharps, but for all that, you can bet all you are worth that it is a cold day when we get left."

"Yes, that is the kind of hair-pins we air," Bowers chimed in.

"Pilgrims, you will please to observe that we have got the bulge on you in the worst kind of way," Talbot continued. "These seven-shooters are self-cockers, and both my pard and myself are dead-shots."

"We haven't attended an Eastern funeral for years, and are rather curious to see if you plant people here now the same as you used to, so if you are not wise enough to surrender quietly, we'll be apt to plug you for keeps."

If ever baffled, impotent rage distorted human countenance, it had full play now.

But the leader of the gang for all his youthful appearance and apparent greenness was evidently a man of desperate resolution and determined ways.

It was he who had lit the gas, and his hand yet lingered on the cock of the burner, and just as Talbot concluded his speech, evidently realizing that every word the Westerner had uttered was true, and the tables had been turned in the most complete manner, he, with a single movement of his thumb and finger, extinguished the gas, and again the room was plunged into utter darkness.

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